Chapter 1

Overview and Introduction

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Interest in mentoring as a means to foster individual growth and development continues to flourish among researchers, practitioners, policymakers, educators, and the public at large. An impressive body of research has developed that has yielded insight into many aspects of the mentoring process. The majority of mentoring research has concentrated on three different focal points, mentoring of youth, student–faculty mentoring relationships, and mentoring within the workplace. Research has been conducted primarily within each of these three defined areas with limited consideration of similar research on mentoring found across areas. The isolated nature of mentoring research to date inspired the development of the current volume.

For the first time, the efforts of leading mentoring scholars focusing on different types of mentoring relationships are organized together to provide a comprehensive review of the broad field of mentoring research and practice. This book is designed as a cross-disciplinary volume that incorporates multiple perspectives on mentoring research. By bringing together several perspectives within one volume, researchers from various disciplines and areas of focus can readily become familiar with one another's work. Comparisons across areas of mentoring scholarship and the subsequent integration of knowledge gained from these varied perspectives can help advance the overall state of mentoring theory, research, and practice.

Objectives for the Handbook

There is a growing realization among scientists from all disciplines that multidisciplinary work is critical to answering the major research questions of the day. One objective of this handbook is to break down the disciplinary silos that exist in the field of mentoring. This is important because different areas of scholarship have unique perspectives and there is much to be learned by integrating existing knowledge across youth, student–faculty, and workplace mentoring. A second objective is to provide a single source for scholars interested in state-of-the-art reviews and critical analysis

on mentoring. By bundling scholarship together in one comprehensive multidisciplinary volume, we enable researchers and practitioners to obtain a richer and more inclusive perspective on the primary themes in mentoring research and practice today than has been available in the past. Finally, we aim to provide practitioners with empirically based, yet accessible information on the practice of mentoring. With the proliferation of formal mentoring programs and initiatives in community, educational, and organizational settings this volume is an important resource for those charged with developing, implementing, and evaluating mentoring programs.

Overview of Handbook Structure and Chapters

After this introduction, Part I of the handbook continues with a chapter on the evolution and definition of mentoring. This is important in that one common denominator across mentoring areas is the struggle to define the term (e.g., Applebaum, Ritchie, & Shapiro, 1994; Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004; Garvey, 2004; Gibb, 2003; Jacobi, 1991). It could be said that much of the empirical research concerning mentoring has focused primarily on substantive validity versus construct validity (Schwab, 1980). That is, the literature has been more concerned with understanding the relationship between mentoring and other constructs, rather than defining the nature of mentoring itself. More work is needed toward the development of comprehensive theoretical explanations of the mentoring construct. Eby, Rhodes, and Allen provide some initial advancement toward this goal and outline some of the ways that mentoring relationships differ from other types of relationships. Chapter 2 also provides the reader with an overview of the three types of mentoring relationships that are the focus of the handbook, youth mentoring, student–faculty mentoring, and workplace mentoring. We recommend that readers begin with chapter 2 as an overview for the entire volume.

Parts II–VI form the bulk of the book and their format is unlike typical edited volumes. Rather than bring together disconnected chapters from the three areas of mentoring focus, we identified five fundamental themes that were common to all areas of mentoring research. Authors from each of the three perspectives contributed chapters on each of the five themes. To minimize overlap, authors were asked to refer to literature and findings relevant only to their specific form of mentoring. For example, authors of the workplace mentoring chapters were careful not to use research regarding student–faculty mentoring. Our intent is for readers to be able to discern what research is generalizable across areas of study and what findings are unique to certain areas of study. The theme for Part II is mentoring theory and methodological issues, the theme for Part III is naturally occurring mentoring relationships, the theme for Part IV is benefits of mentoring relationships, the theme for Part V is diversity and mentoring, and the theme for Part VI is best practices for formal mentoring programs. At the end of each part is a "reflection" chapter. The reflection chapters provide a brief summary of the similarities and differences across the three areas of mentoring within each theme. For example, the first reflection chapter (chapter 6) integrates the information contained in the chapters on theoretical and methodological issues in youth (chapter 3), student–faculty (chapter 4), and workplace (chapter 5) mentoring.

Theme	Youth	Student– faculty	Workplace	Reflection
	Chapter			
Theoretical and methodological issues	3	4	5	6
Naturally occurring mentoring	7	8	9	10
Benefits of mentoring	11	12	13	14
Diversity and mentoring	15	16	17	18
Formal mentoring practices	19	20	21	22

Figure 1.1 Matrix of themed chapters

The chapters contained in Parts II–VI may be thought of in terms of a 5 × 4 matrix that considers the five themes and the various perspectives (see Figure 1.1). For example, a reader interested in focusing on youth mentoring relationships should turn to chapters, 3, 7, 11, 15, and 19. A reader interested in the benefits of mentoring across all areas would turn to chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14.

The final section of the handbook (Part VII) provides integrative ideas for viewing mentoring and suggestions for future research. In chapter 23, Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt, and Crosby discuss cross-cutting future directions for mentoring research. Their chapter raises provocative research ideas for scholars interested in better understanding mentoring relationships and integrating knowledge across the three types of mentoring discussed in this volume. They also challenge commonly held assumptions about mentoring in an effort to promote critical thinking on the topic. The volume concludes with chapter 24. Allen and Eby develop an integrative perspective of mentoring that considers multiple levels of development and multiple levels of analysis as applied to all types of mentoring relationships. They propose that fulfillment of the need to belong plays a central role in explaining why mentoring relationships are a powerful tool for individual growth and development.

The audience for this volume includes a wide range of scholars who are conducting research on all forms of mentoring relationships across a variety of contexts and disciplines. Professionals engaged in the design and delivery of formal mentoring programs will also benefit from this handbook, as will policy makers who have a stake in the successful delivery of mentoring programs. We hope that this handbook will be a useful resource to all interested in mentoring and serve as a guide for charting new directions in mentoring research, theory, and practice.

References

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