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Chapter 1: Introduction—The Roles and Process of Mentoring

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In this monograph we bring together three different studies about mentoring across the physical education profession. Throughout this issue we use the terms *mentor* and *protégé* to describe the individuals involved in mentoring relationships. Generally, mentors are wise and trusted guides and advisors, and protégés are the people who receive career support, protection, and advocacy. Given the complex and challenging nature of educators' work, the notion that educators in various settings and career paths should have mentors to guide them through skill development and workplace management has become increasingly accepted. Mentoring has generally been perceived as a positive relationship that enhances the lives of protégés (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The extent to which mentors are meaningfully engaged in the mentoring process might have a significant impact on the retention of a protégé and/or the success of a program. The mentoring process extends far beyond merely supporting new teachers. It includes a way of thinking about the overall recruitment, support, and retention of educators across all types and stages of careers and types of institutions for the purpose of supporting educators in the face of the increasing demands and changing climate of education.

The existing physical education mentoring literature contains two distinct areas of research which focus on beginning teachers (i.e., induction) and higher education faculty. Research on mentoring beginning teachers was prompted largely by O'Sullivan's (1989) call for inquiry. The following section highlights results from studies that focused on beginning teachers. First, beginning physical education teachers encounter similar challenges regardless of their contextual variables (Stroot, Faucette, & Schwager, 1993). Second, induction assistance is valuable to beginning physical educators on a variety of levels, such as refining instructional and managerial techniques (Napper-Owen & Phillips, 1995), acclimatizing to school cultures (Smyth, 1995), adapting to the novel role of being a fulltime teacher (Solmon, Worthy, & Carter, 1993), and dealing with issues

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of reality shock, role conflict, isolation, and wash-out (Stroot et al.). Third, the notion of collaborative mentoring offers the opportunity for collegial sharing that might not otherwise occur given the day-to-day demands of schools as workplaces (Napper-Owen & Phillips). Finally, Stroot and colleagues recommended the development of “induction teams” (p. 385) comprised of university faculty, school mentors, and beginning teachers. This kind of mentoring approach was suggested as an effective way to bridge the induction year(s) by fostering communication and making resources available for beginning physical education teachers.

Research focused on higher education faculty exists primarily from calls to examine pretenure faculty members’ transitions into the professoriate (e.g., Kovar & Overdorf, 1996; Mitchell & Ormond, 1989; Safrit, 1984; Thomas, 1997; Williamson, 1993). Findings from these studies indicated that pretenure faculty seek clearer criteria for job performance, collegial support and mentoring, and regular evaluation and feedback as important factors for facilitating roles as faculty and reducing stress. In this monograph, Dodds (2005) suggests that limited research has been conducted and more conceptual papers exist relative to mentoring faculty in Physical Education and Kinesiology (see Clark, 2003; Metzler & Poole, 1996; Wright & Smith, 2000). Whereas this work is valuable, the need to have data-based research on mentoring faculty across the career span cannot be overstated. In fact, some of the challenges associated with studying mentoring in higher education are addressed in the final chapter of this monograph.

Before 1990 the literature on mentoring consisted of program descriptions, survey-based evaluations, definitions of mentoring, and general discussions of mentors’ roles and responsibilities. Researchers did not conceptualize mentors’ work in relation to novices’ learning. Neither had they studied the practice of mentoring directly. In addition, limited numbers of comprehensive studies have been done that are well informed by theory and designed to examine the context, content, and consequences of mentoring in any depth (Little, 1990). Studying the mentoring process has the potential to help mentors and protégés work together more explicitly, which could lead to a greater transfer of knowledge and more effective facilitation by the mentors (Zachary, 2000). Thus, the purpose of this monograph is to explore the various mentoring relationships that serve to support and enhance the professional development of physical educators at different points in their career paths.

This monograph includes descriptions and summaries of current research about mentoring in education. These studies were not planned, designed, or conducted together. In chapters 2 and 3, findings from two different mentorship-based K–12 teacher development projects are reported, and the roles and impact of mentoring on female college and university faculty are examined in chapter 4. Each chapter includes a literature review, which establishes the argument for each study, and explains how the study builds on, differs from, contributes to, or fills a gap in current research and theory. The final chapter offers a synthesis of the data-based chapters, recommendations for mentoring and mentoring research, and suggestions for future research directions.

The authors of chapter 2 examine the various communities of practice that were formed throughout a teacher development project that included a formal mentoring component. Specifically, these authors describe a theoretical approach to understanding learning in communities of practice and present an approach for analyzing professional learning resulting from social interactions among project

stakeholders (12 teachers, 6 project mentors, and 7 project researchers). Using a situated learning perspective, it is argued that mentoring must be studied within the contexts in which it occurs, taking into account both the individual learner (i.e., teachers, mentors, and researchers) and the physical and social systems in which the learner participates (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Putnam and Borko (2000) identified three themes central to a situated learning perspective: (a) cognition is situated in particular physical and social contexts, (b) cognition is social in nature, and (c) knowing is distributed across the individual, others, and tools. Mentoring data presented in this study come from a larger study that focused on middle school physical education programs. Specifically, the goals of the Assessment Initiative in Middle School Physical Education (AIMS-PE) teacher development project were to assist in-service teachers' examination and reframing of their assessment practices, as well as to increase their students' knowledge and behaviors around physical activity.

In chapter 3 the authors report the results of a mentorship-based professional development intervention study grounded in the induction and mentoring literature. The purpose of this study was twofold. First, the study aimed to determine how mentorship-based professional development influenced mentors' self-rated competence of mentoring; the second goal was to analyze changes in newer teachers' thinking about teaching and the mentoring experience. Two groups of teachers participated in the project: 15 experienced teachers learned to be mentors for 15 newer physical education teachers who volunteered to learn and be mentored. The authors hypothesized that the mentorship-based professional development project would increase mentors' self-reported competence in mentoring abilities and lead to positive outcomes in the newer teachers' thinking about teaching and the mentoring experience. This project was an attempt to address the gap in the research related to teachers mentoring other teachers in the development of curricular expertise. In this study experienced teachers were provided with a range of professional development activities focused on developing mentoring skills. These activities were guided by the principles of adult learning theory (e.g., Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998), which focused on the active, collaborative, and use-based approach to learning. This approach was different from traditional approaches to children's learning, which is often presented from a content perspective. Adult learning is most effective from a process perspective when learners are included in the planning and implementation of educational programs. The study reported in chapter 3 focuses on the impact of this mentoring process.

In the final data-based chapter of this monograph, Patt Dodds uses a phenomenological perspective (Creswell, 1998) to examine the forms and sources of mentoring that 54 women sport pedagogy faculty experienced over the course of their lives and career pathways, principally concentrating on the time period from their first formal professional preparation to their present career stage. Specifically, this study explores the meanings of mentoring for academic women holding physical education/sport pedagogy faculty positions. Although rich, theoretically grounded mentoring literature exists in social psychology, mentoring research specifically about women faculty present a mixed, somewhat atheoretical picture built mostly from questionnaires and surveys. This study uses Kram's (1985; Kram & Hall, 1995) mentoring theory, which posits mentoring as having two main components: to foster a protégé's psychosocial development (competence, identity, and professional effectiveness) and to support professional

development (career advancement). Professional development includes aspects such as sponsorship, visibility, coaching, and protection, whereas psychosocial aspects include role modeling, acceptance, counseling, and friendship.

Knowledge derived from these studies is valuable for physical education teacher education professionals for several reasons. First, the findings from the studies in this monograph extend the current knowledge of mentoring relative to the experiences of inservice teachers and college/university faculty. Second, these studies address the need to know more about how mentors facilitate their work with various constituents (e.g., teachers, students, college/university faculty) both formally and informally. Finally, these studies identify similarities and differences in styles, types, and formats of mentoring. In addition, these studies share which type of mentoring those individuals along different career paths report as being the most beneficial to their personal and professional development.

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