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## Editorial

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### Mary Kathleen Feeney

Doctoral Candidate,  
Department of Public Administration and Policy,  
University of Georgia,  
Athens, GA 30602, USA  
E-mail: mkfeeney@uga.edu

### Barry Bozeman

Ander Crenshaw Chair and Regents' Professor of Public Policy,  
Department of Public Administration and Policy,  
University of Georgia,  
Athens, GA 30602, USA  
E-mail: bbozeman@uga.edu

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## 1 Introduction

This Special Issue titled 'Mentoring: a tool for social and human capital learning' aims to narrow the discussion of mentoring to one of career mentoring as a tool for social and human capital learning and change within organisations. Mentoring is defined as a relationship between a senior more experienced individual (the mentor) who invests personal energy and time in a relationship with a less experienced individual (the protégé) to help the protégé develop career-related skills and knowledge. Mentoring can be used to enhance individual skills, encourage socialisation within organisations, prepare and support individuals during times of stress and organisational change, and enhance learning through organisations. Research on the numerous benefits and possible dark side of mentoring abounds. Unfortunately, in its abundance, mentoring research has grown to mean everything to everyone. Furthermore there are few studies investigating mentoring as it is related to organizational change and learning outside of private business organisations. This issue focuses on career mentoring outcomes and how those outcomes vary by sector (public, non-profit, and private) and organisational environment (large scale, small scale, and unique mission).

This issue builds on the mission of the *International Journal of Learning and Change* by investigating how mentoring affects human action and organisational structures. Mentoring has become an increasingly popular tool in organisations. This special issue aims to understand how mentoring relates to the management of scientific and technological change in organisations, the training of scientists and engineers, public management, and interpersonal organisations. The papers explore the theoretical and practical ways in which mentoring relates to organisational vitality, capability, knowledge, and change.

There are numerous methods that can be applied to understand mentoring and mentoring outcomes in organisations. We invited submissions of analytical papers that developed or tested mentoring theory using qualitative, quantitative, or multiple methods. Our primary interest was investigating mentoring as a tool for organisational change and learning, but we were also looking for papers that used innovative ways to research mentoring, in particular how mentorships may vary by organisation and sector. Though this issue primarily focuses on papers using empirical tools to investigate mentoring outcomes, as guest editors of this special issue we also wanted to include a philosophical perspective of mentoring. By including articles that vary in their approaches to investigate mentoring outcomes, we hope to elucidate how mentoring relationships shape organisations.

## **2 The papers**

There are six papers presented here. The first three papers focus on mentoring in the government agencies in the United States and how it plays a unique role in shaping outcomes for individual careers and organisations. In the first paper, Mary K. Feeney investigates mentoring in state government with a concentration on the role of mentoring in advancing women. The second paper, by Heather Getha-Taylor and Jeff L. Brudney analyses mentoring as a strategic human capital management tool in the US federal government. Continuing the theme of mentoring in the public sector, Cynthia Riemenschneider and colleagues investigate mentoring during organisational reform and change. The next two papers explore mentoring in academic settings, in particular investigating mentoring outcomes among scientists and engineers and how those outcomes vary by gender. Stephanie G. Riegle's grounded theory approach investigates senior women in academia who are mentors, while Mary Frank Fox and Carolyn Fonesca research the importance of individual and organisational characteristics in shaping mentorships and faculty performance. We conclude with a manuscript by Michael Elmes and Charles Smith which departs from the empirical focus of the earlier papers to investigate mentors as spiritual guides and the possible tensions that can arise in power-dependent relationships.

In the first paper investigating mentoring outcomes in the public sector, Mary K. Feeney presents an analysis of mentorships in state government in the United States. Feeney notes that many public organisations have promoted mentoring as a tool for advancing women in the public sector, but that there is a dearth of research on mentoring outcomes for women in the public sector. Feeney's empirical analysis finds that having a mentor increases career outcomes for men and women. She concludes that women are more likely than men to have female mentors, but that mentoring outcomes do not significantly vary by gender. Feeney argues that mentoring is an important tool for organisational socialisation and to help individuals advance in their careers, but questions the effort to use mentoring to advantage women in particular.

The next paper, by Heather Getha-Taylor and Jeff L. Brudney also studies mentoring in government. Taylor and Brudney present an analysis of mentoring as a strategic human capital management tool in the US federal government programmes. They use document analysis and interviews with senior executives and mentoring professionals to assess how formal mentoring programmes transfer knowledge within organisations. This paper

explores how mentoring, a topic which is largely ignored in public administration research, may help to achieve strategic human capital goals in the public sector.

Cynthia Riemenschneider, Myria Allen, Margaret Reid, and Deborah Armstrong also investigate public sector mentoring, but focus on mentoring within the climate of public sector reforms and organisational change. The authors argue that in the face of increasing pressure to do more with less, mentoring may play an important role in helping public managers to cope with change-induced stress. Riemenschneider and colleagues investigate whether career and psychosocial mentoring moderate the relationship between organisational change and employee stress among state government Information Technology employees. They find positive relationships between career mentoring and subjective stress and between perceived workload and subjective stress. Riemenschneider and colleagues suggest that public organisations considering transformational change should be cognizant of the stress levels of both mentors and protégés.

Stephanie G. Riegle presents a study that centres on the experiences of mentors in academic science and engineering departments. Rather than concentrate on the organisational newcomers, Riegle investigates mentoring among mid and late-career individuals who are mentors. Using grounded theory and interviews, Riegle investigates mentoring among senior female faculty in science and engineering departments at a Research Extensive institution. Riegle finds women identified two barriers to mentoring among senior female faculty. First, the institution promotes mentoring of students above mentoring other faculty and second, that female faculty mentors view the lack of mentoring and organisational socialisation as detrimental to their careers. Riegle discusses this disconnect between institutional values and the needs of individual female faculty members.

Mary Frank Fox and Carolyn Fonesca present an empirical analysis to investigate mentorships between science and engineering faculty, by gender. They centre their analysis within a conceptual framework about the importance of individual and organisational characteristics in explaining faculty performance, including mentoring. Fox and Fonesca analyse the factors which determine who mentors and whom is mentored. In particular, they focus on the role of individual and organisational and institutional characteristics' for mentoring. Fox and Fonesca find that higher levels of rank significantly increase the likelihood of being a mentor among both women and men. Their findings also point to gender differences in explaining who mentors male protégés, female protégés, or both.

Finally, Michael Elmes and Charles Smith conclude with a manuscript that presents a philosophical investigation of the role of mentors as spiritual guides. Elmes and Smith use a philosophical perspective to explore mentoring and the possible tensions that can arise in these personal, power-dependent relationships. They build on Bateson's (1972) theory of double-binds to uncover the paradox of power differentials in close relationships and to the multi-levelled nature of communication in any close, power-based relationship. Elmes and Smith draw on the spiritual insights from various wisdom traditions such as Zen Buddhism, Sufi, Japanese sword fighting and Christian traditions to discuss the roles of mentors as spiritual guides and methods for avoiding and transcending double-binds in mentorships. Elmes and Smith call for research on the micro-dynamics of mentoring relationships.

We received many excellent submissions for this issue and would like to thank those who contributed to this special issue. We are grateful to all the excellent reviewers whose thoughtful comments helped to strengthen the content of this special issue. We also thank the Editor-in-Chief, Shantha Liyanage, for his support.

Mary K. Feeney  
Barry Bozeman