

The Influence of Mentoring on Four Foreign-born Women Faculty Members' Resilience in Education: A Case Study

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the influence of mentoring on professional growth and resilience with foreign-born female faculty members in education. We sought to develop theory and articulate implications for further research by exploring the influences and benefits of cross-cultural mentoring in higher education. A case study approach was used to dive deeply into four faculty members' experiences of career mentoring for professional advancement and psychosocial development. The two research questions focused on faculty challenges and explored how mentor guidance and suggestions for action were applied. Mentoring offered personal and professional support and guidance, enhanced problem-solving skills, networking strategies, and new service opportunities. Primary and secondary data sources were thematically analyzed using Ginsberg's 7 C's of Resilience: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control. This model was chosen because many new faculty in a new country need and want guidance for and explanations about multiple aspects of American faculty life and academic service. We discovered that mentoring to meet career and personal development goals also strengthened mentees' resilience described as increased competency, confidence, connections, character, contributions, coping, and control.

Keywords: Cross-cultural mentoring, resilience, faculty, women in higher education, career mentoring.

Introduction

Educational institutions are continually evolving due to constant internal and external changes (Allison, 2012; Cuaton, 2020; Ozmusul, 2017). For example, many faculty in education care about student enrollment, student success, funding, program and staffing difficulties, adaptations to online teaching and learning, barriers to social justice, and mental health problems (Education Drive, 2020; Whitford, 2020). For faculty to effectively operate under continuous change while managing life challenges, resilience is required (Allison, 2012; Low, 2010; Preston & Schaarsberg, 2018). Faculty members juggle multiple responsibilities, including teaching, engaging in research, providing necessary services, managing self-care, and demonstrating care for their students' welfare (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020).

According to Bickel (2009, para. 4), investing in faculty resilience is a smart move, stating that, "an academic institution's faculty are its greatest asset, yet many AHCs treat them more like expendable fuel - even though faculty disengagement translates not only into lower productivity, but also behaviors that damage the

learning environment." Saeed, et al., (2017) added that constantly dealing with new pressures, expectations, heavy workloads, and bureaucracy issues in work settings can negatively impact the overall well-being of employees. High job-related stress is positively associated with decreased work performance, depersonalization, lower self-esteem, and lower employee morale (Wolfgang et al., 2015).

It is estimated that the United States spends up to \$300 billion annually on stress-related illnesses, with costs stemming from absenteeism, lost productivity, and increased healthcare utilization (Ortiz, 2019; Saeed et al., 2017). More specifically, Goh, Pfeffer, and Zenios (2015) found that workplace stressors alone contribute approximately \$190 billion in healthcare costs each year, underscoring the serious implications of unmanaged stress. In higher education, inadequate mentoring can intensify such stressors, particularly for female faculty, whose career development and job satisfaction are often compromised, leading to increased attrition rates (Cross et al., 2019). Martin (2020) further observed a "paucity of research comparing the outcomes of mentoring in the promotion of resilience in higher academia" (p. 3), highlighting

the need for institutional strategies that support faculty well-being and retention.

The purpose of this study was to describe the influence of mentoring on professional growth and resilience for three foreign-born female faculty members in higher education and one in K-12 education. There are similarities across these faculty members' experiences of learning to navigate expectations and norms and using mentoring to help them adapt and cope. Because mentoring and its impact on faculty member resilience tends to be limited (Martin, 2020), this work begins to fill this gap. Data were analyzed using content analysis to identify career challenges, psychosocial challenges, impact of mentoring, and evidence of each of Ginsburg's 7 Crucial C's of Resilience (2020). The research questions addressed in this case study were:

1. What types of challenges might foreign-born faculty members in the USA face that inspired them to seek a mentor?
2. What role does mentoring play in the development of resilience for four foreign-born faculty members in the USA?

Literature Review

The four topics reviewed in the literature were the benefits of mentoring, challenges in mentoring relationships, mentoring and resilience, and Ginsburg's 7 Crucial C's (2020). For the purposes of this study, the authors use two definitions of mentoring. Doyle et al. (2016) defined mentoring as "both a relationship and a process between at least two individuals that provide support and an exchange of knowledge and expertise," (p. 305). Johnson (2016) defined mentoring as "a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member or professional acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) graduate student or junior professional" (p. 88). These definitions describe the relational elements of mentoring as well as the hierarchical relationship in each mentor-mentee pair included in this case study.

The Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring provides intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to mentors and mentees as well as organizations (Cross, et al., 2019; Day, 2016; Howard et al., 2017; Klinge, 2015). Such benefits include professional exposure, recognition, creativity, social connections, emotional and career satisfaction, psychological well-being, rejuvenation, advancement, retention, higher productivity, professional success, leadership development, guidance, advice, and support. Mentoring also connects individuals and cultures, facilitates reform, enhances values, builds a culture of trust, instills confidence, and increases self-efficacy, self-satisfaction, and rejuvenation ((Hagemeir et al., 2013; Johnson, 2022; Msengi et al., 2013). McClain et al. (2014) called mentoring

"a major piece of the puzzle to foster the overall success for retention, tenure and promotion for women and diverse faculty in higher education" (p. 18). According to Masten and Powell (2003), "Resilience refers to patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity" (p. 4), and Ginsburg (2020) defines resilience as "the capacity to rise above difficult circumstances ... [that] allows us to exist in this less-than-perfect world while moving forward with optimism and confidence" (p. 26).

Petry (2011) identified some of the threats or adverse events that faculty members and other professionals are exposed to in higher education that require them to increase their resilience skills or increase their ability to productively adapt. This includes concerns about job security, workload issues, unmet promises made by administrators, harassment, dealing with office politics, and bullying. Furthermore, uncertainty, isolation, lack of an adequate support system, and burnout are among the adversities that professionals in higher education face (Thistlethwaite, 2018).

Petry (2011) posited that mentors can foster resilience in educational settings by offering genuine support to new faculty members and can serve as great sources of wisdom for new faculty members toward offsetting challenges. In agreement, Ginsburg (2020) believes that parents and teachers guide, much like mentors do, their protégés toward resiliency by believing that adversity can be strengthening when not met by the negative psychosocial tendencies of self-doubt, victim personas, or over-reacting. Social networking is positively associated with faculty development, ultimately leading to resilience (Burdick, 2015). Mentors can serve a role in providing social support and network needed by faculty, and such support can create a sense of belonging, acceptance, and connectedness during stressful times when change occurs (Morettini et al., 2020). Having a mentor who cares for their mentee can lead to personal and professional growth and can assist mentees in their journey toward meeting career goals (Howard et al., 2017); Preston & Schaarsberg, 2018), thus increasing the chances of attracting and retaining highly qualified educators (Huisman et al., 2010).

A study conducted by Martin (2020) emphasized the positive influence of mentoring on resilience toward faculty and retention enhancement. The ability to be calm and manage emotions during challenging times is related to resilience (Ridhi & Rangnekar, 2015), which suggests that effective mentoring can also assist mentees in enhancing their emotional intelligence (Torkildson, 2023).

Challenges in Mentoring Relationships

One cannot underestimate the positive value of mentoring if implemented appropriately (Hogarty, & Stephen, 2015; Johnson, 2002). However, it is important to note that there are organizational and individual challenges

that may arise in mentoring relationships (Cross et al., 2019). Such challenges include a mismatch between mentors and mentees, lack of training, subpar mentor competency, inadequate scheduling, time commitment issues, interpersonal and personality concerns between mentors and mentees, mentor recruitment issues, overwhelming workloads, insufficient trust, and a lack of time due to high work demands (Cross, et al., 2019); Hogarty, & Stephen, 2015; Johnson, 2002; Msengi et al., 2013. Other obstacles include a lack of rewards, a paucity of funding, complications based on the size of the program, insufficient faculty mentors with similar interests, too few role models (Johnson, 2016; Smith, 2018) and power differences (Cross et al., 2019). Johnson (2012) offers some important organization and individual strategies that can be applied to increase the success of mentoring programs and relationships. Individual strategies include

“setting clear expectations, considering the needs of the mentees, creating a balance between mentoring and other professional responsibilities, modeling personal health and self-awareness, attending to issues of gender, race, and culture, being vigilant to conflict or potential dysfunction, and avoiding exploitation and other unethical practices” (pp. 94-95). Implementing a “best fit” approach to mentoring is important, including one-on-one mentoring, distance mentoring, and group mentoring (UC DAVIS, 2018). Foreign-born faculty members may face additional unique barriers, such a lack of understanding institutional culture, difficulty acquiring adequate networking, a lack of access to social support, and language and accent issues (Herget, 2016).

Mentoring and Resilience

Everyone has a unique way of dealing with personal or professional challenges in life modalities toward building resilience. Mentoring has been offered as a means for contributing to the development of resilience (Msengi et al., 2020).

Several studies have suggested a need for mentoring programs in higher education to enhance faculty development, retention, and promotion (Ridhi et al., 2015), Yun et al. (2016). According to Johnson (2002) and Yun, Badki, and Sorcinelli (2016), new faculty members in higher education face challenges which can impede their path to success, such as difficulties with balancing research, teaching, and service responsibilities. Increased responsibilities and expectations, along with decreased resources and support, can increase employee stress (Lane, 2013), and therefore resilience is needed by faculty members to persist and succeed.

Onyeneke (2018) reported that issues faculty face includes isolation, marginalization, and discrimination, but offered that mentoring can help toward retaining faculty members. Scarce

resources, politically charged environments, and competition for power can lead to stress reactions (Famer, 2010). Incivility and bullying were also cited as issues in higher education (Norman, 2019). In addition, the needs of faculty in higher education include professional development, adequate access to work opportunities, and emotional and intellectual support (Rickquemore, 2016). Mentoring is one tool that can be used to help faculty in higher education overcome challenges and thrive in their new educational environments (Farmer, 2010; Onyeneke, 2018).

Mentoring is not only beneficial to mentees, but also to mentors and the organizations they serve. Some of the well-researched benefits of mentoring on mentors include an increased sense of purpose, personal satisfaction, increased opportunities for growth, creativity, enhanced skills, expanded self-awareness, rejuvenation, collaboration, and an increased professional network (Banerjee-Batist, 2020; Cross, et al., 2019; Klinge, 2015; Msengi, Harris, & Msengi, 2013). These authors also pointed to the organizational benefits generated by mentoring, including enhanced productivity, work performance, recruitment, retention, career satisfaction, engagement, organizational trust, collaboration, and employee health and resilience. Additional benefits to the organization include building psychological safety, maintaining a constructive learning environment, and enhancing individual disciplines (Kim et al., 2019). Furthermore, emotional control, support, problem solving skills, and effective interventions are other benefits (Meneghel et al., 2019).

Mentors can also help mentees in their resilience journeys by assisting them in navigating through stressful situations at work and talking with them about problem solving strategies, helping them enhance their confidence and persistence, and helping toward developing positive connections by providing acceptance and promoting positive attitudes (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015; Petersen, 2018).

Ginsburg's 7 Crucial C's of Resilience

Ginsburg's 7 Crucial C's of Resilience (2020) were chosen because Ginsburg focused on “giving children and teens roots and wings” (the book's tag line) so they could succeed in their endeavors. Many immigrants feel unsteady in a new country as they adjust to the language, norms, social structures, and language. Immigrants often want to find their footing within a community of people in which to belong, and to integrate themselves as members of their new country.

These C's describe seven dispositions inherent in each of us across our lifespan, but that need developing to be more resilient. These C's can be intentionally developed or thwarted when there are too few opportunities to use these C's in daily life. Each C is listed below, followed by a

brief explanation:

- **Competence:** the ability to handle situations effectively, acquired through experience
- **Confidence:** The solid belief in one's own abilities, based on demonstrating one's competence
- **Connection:** A sense of security that produces strong values and prevents one from undermining relationships
- **Character:** A fundamental sense of right and wrong, prepared to make wise choices, contribute to the world, be stable adults
- **Contribution:** Realization that the world is a better place because they are in it, having a sense of purpose, make choices that improve the world
- **Coping:** Being prepared to overcome life's challenges and using a variety of positive strategies to protect themselves and others from harm
- **Control:** Knowing what actions lead to various consequences, and that making volitional decisions further promotes one's competence and confidence

Although Ginsberg's resilience theory was based on children and youth, these 7 C's are applicable to foreign-born faculty members because they, like children and youth, enter new environments without knowing ahead of time what the expectations and norms are. And yet they strive to successfully contribute and get what they need and believe they should have in order to succeed.

Method

This study utilized a qualitative (Creswell, 2013), multiple case study design to examine the influence of mentoring on the resilience of four foreign-born women faculty members, three in universities and one in a school district. The case study method was selected because the authors together had a small number of foreign-born faculty as participants, and we were interested in the experiences of mentoring for this specific group.

A multiple case study approach, as outlined by Stake (1995) and Yin (2018), allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' mentoring experiences, highlighting the uniqueness of each case and the themes that emerged across participants. This approach was particularly suitable for describing the influence of mentoring on the development of resilience, within the context of higher education institutions. We focused on the development of participants' resilience due to mentoring in academic settings, as an aspect of professional growth.

To identify participants, purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) was used to ensure a selection of individuals who could provide rich, relevant insights into mentoring relationships. These participants work in education across different

institutions and identify as women. To be included in this study, participants met the following criteria:

- Identified as a female faculty member who is foreign-born
- Educated in their country of origin through high school
- Employed at a university, college, or school district in the United States
- Participated in mentoring as a faculty member for at least two years to advance professionally

Participant 1 is a mid-career faculty member in community college education. Mentoring was used to meet career development goals, specifically to develop values-based curricula for adult learners in emotionally safe learning environments. This mentee wanted to better promote transformational learning through shared perspectives across generations and cultures.

Participant 2 is an early career faculty member who facilitated leadership and program development in young children's and family-based programs in the USA and China. An expert in Asian Studies, her work focused on developing culture-centered programs to support low-income Asian immigrants. She was mentored for career development working with graduate students in thesis and research. Mentoring was also used to promote ways for her to integrate her research and theory-based approaches into graduate research courses.

Participant 3 immigrated to the USA as a refugee with 14 years of education (eight years of primary school and six years of secondary school). She earned her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees after immigrating to the United States and is a graduate faculty member in the mid-west. For her, mentoring is valued as a strategy for achieving professional success.

Participant 4 moved to the USA as a young adult with her husband and child and teaches in early education. She had language coaches through college so she could express her ideas fully and clearly in English. She earned a Master of Arts in Education and a teaching credential. She used mentoring for career and psychosocial goals to navigate credentialing processes, understand school district norms, and ways to work with families, school leaders, and community service providers across cultures.

Data were gathered as mentoring session/conversation notes, during mentee interviews, email exchanges, and endorsement letters. Interview data included historical information from participants' country of origin. To analyze these data, aspects of each participant's profile, reasons for mentoring, challenges, and benefits were coded to determine themes. The key themes were career/professional growth and personal/psycho-social growth in their faculty roles. All findings were used to answer the

research questions.

The researchers collected and coded mentees' narrative accounts that described significant mentoring experiences related to psychosocial and professional goals. We coded these accounts to identify evidence of workplace challenges, benefits of mentoring, individual development, and resilience in academic settings. We also coded these accounts to understand how mentoring relationships enhanced their resilience as evidenced by how the 7 Cs (Ginsburg, 2020) were supported by the mentoring relationship. Results

Mentoring outcomes for these faculty show that, while foreign-born faculty sought mentoring

for career and psychosocial development, five additional outcomes were identified as additional benefits from mentoring experiences. Table 1 provides these five outcomes and the frequency of related statements.

Both psychosocial challenges and career challenges were identified in the participant experiences that they sought to address through mentoring. The top psychosocial challenge was shifting their identity to a faculty role, and the top career challenge was learning to navigate the institution's expectations. The psychosocial challenges indicated a desire to make an impact on both students and colleagues, and wanting to learn how to navigate the institutional

Table 1.
Mentoring Outcomes

Mentoring Outcome	Frequency
Advocacy for Self or Learners	18
Professional Skill Development	14
Goal Setting and Prioritizing	13
Instructional or Pedagogical Decision Making	12
Career Opportunities	9

To answer RQ1, participant profiles were reviewed to identify two types of challenges: Career Challenges and Psychosocial Challenges. Participant statements were reviewed and categorized into Career Challenges and Psychosocial Challenges, presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Participant's Challenges

Challenge Category	Challenge Type	Frequency
Psychosocial	Shift identity to faculty role	17
	Intentional make an impact on others	8
	Navigate personal expectations vs institutional expectations	7
Career	Navigate institution's expectations	11
	Respond to learners	9
	Navigate culturally based norms	8
	Build social capital	4
	Introduce new teaching strategies	2

Table 3:
Resilience indicators aligned to Ginsburg's 7 Cs of Resilience

Resilience Indicators	Frequency
Coping	13
Competence	12
Confidence	11
Connection	10
Contribution	9
Character	6
Control	6

expectations, especially when these expectations were different than in their culture's educational systems growing up.

Reviewing the mentoring notes and interview transcripts revealed that mentees felt either they did not fully belong in their institution, or they did not know how to communicate and advocate for their students' needs within the institution's cultural expectations. Likewise, participants' career challenges revealed that they benefitted from mentoring. They learned how to respond to their learners in ways that balanced differences between themselves, the institution, and their students' cultural backgrounds. Participants knew they needed to build social capital to access additional opportunities such as research, projects, and grants. These faculty sought mentoring to build their social capital in the United States, even knowing they brought valuable and unique perspectives to their faculty role. At times, their mentors served as allies and sponsors and helped them navigate and advocate for their perspectives to be heard and valued.

To answer RQ2, mentoring notes and interview transcripts were reviewed to categorize statements into each of the 7 Crucial C's of Resilience (Ginsburg, 2020). The four most frequent C's found in the data were Coping, Competence, Confidence, and Connection (Table 3), and all seven of Ginsburg's indicators of resilience were expressed by the participants.

Discussion

As a package, these findings led us to conclude that mentoring foreign-born faculty members is necessary. Mentoring helped them integrate into unfamiliar institutional norms, build social capital for equitable access to opportunities and advancement, and advocate for themselves. These were seen by these faculty as necessary even before they believed they were contributing to their students and to the instruction overall. These findings indicate that mentoring can play a prominent role in foreign-born faculty members' development of resilience.

The primary mentoring outcome was advocacy for self or their learners. This finding is well aligned with faculty's primary challenges of knowing how to shift themselves into a faculty role (psychosocial challenge) and knowing ways to navigate their institution's expectations (career challenge). This finding also aligns with the top three resilience indicators of coping, competence, and confidence.

We consider advocacy for self and others as the key finding: that without knowing how to advocate for their perspectives, skills, and contributions, they will not feel they fully belong. These faculty benefitted most from mentoring to increase advocacy for themselves and others.

Mentors can help their mentees break through systemic barriers that mentees cannot do on their own. Mentees need to be shown the strategies to advance themselves by other foreign-born faculty or white faculty as allies. Mentors should uncover any of their own self-imposed biases, so they do not inadvertently promote self-isolation, or promote hidden biases. The requirements for advancement, for example, must be the same for foreign-born faculty as they are for American faculty.

We believe that when foreign-born faculty have access to "hidden" information, also referred to "the hidden curriculum" (Chavanne & Williams, 2024), opportunities, and implicit norms and expectations, everyone wins. Not only will they have belonging, be more productive, and contribute at their full potential, but also the institution benefits from their contributions. These key findings led us to conclude that mentoring foreign-born faculty members is necessary. Mentoring helped them integrate into unfamiliar institutional norms, build social capital for equitable access to opportunities and advancement, and advocate for themselves. These outcomes were seen by these faculty as necessary, even before they were sure about the impact of their contributions to their students and to their institution overall.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all four foreign-born faculty participants expressed what it meant and felt like to be uprooted from their home country, with only their education, culture, and history to inform their approach to the faculty role. Unfortunately, their roles also included experiences of marginalization. Through mentoring, their impact was strengthened. What they influenced and what they brought ultimately uplifted their students and broadened their own approach to teaching and pedagogy.

In looking for similarities and differences across these data, we found that participants benefited from mentoring for both career development and psychosocial development to overcome their challenges. Resilience indicators support the conclusion that effective mentorship fostered personal and professional growth and enhanced well-being. Importantly, it helped participants navigate complex academic and cultural environments. In short, we conclude that each participant's resilience increased due to mentoring.

These narratives suggest that, regardless of their country of origin, effective mentoring can strengthen the resilience of foreign-born faculty females in higher and elementary education. Effective mentoring, as described by Clabaugh and Dominguez (2022), intentionally applies autonomy supports to develop mentee self-determination and self-directedness.

Participants' narratives suggested varied yet shared ways in which these foreign-born female faculty members benefited from effective mentoring. Their resilience was strengthened, evidenced by demonstrating all of the 7 Critical C's (Ginsburg, 2020), as well as commonalities and unique needs across the participant group.

Recommendations

Therefore, it is recommended that mentoring in education programs be designed with an awareness of both the universal and the individual needs of faculty. When developing and implementing mentoring initiatives, additional care should be provided to address cultural differences in their understanding of expectations, to reduce the negative effects of not being exposed to 'the hidden curriculum' of education in the USA. This is especially valuable regarding the unique contributions foreign-born faculty bring to their role, based on their experiences before coming to the United States that, in turn, provides a way for foreign-born students to be supported as well.

As an ethical consideration, the mentor should be highly trusted and have no conflict of interest for mentoring, including not being in a supervisory relationship with the mentee. As described by Alred and Garvey (2019), an effective mentor builds a trusting environment, takes their mentee seriously, listens yet challenges, and supports the mentee's growth in knowledge, skills, and experiences. In ethical concerns, when there is a power differential - one's department chair is their mentor - there may be a conflict of interest regarding promoting the mentee's advancement in the institution.

Further, implications for career advancement for foreign-born faculty, based on Kram's Phases in Mentoring (Murphy & Kram, 2014), can reduce issues of competition and marginalization. The career functions of sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, and sponsoring new or challenging work can be more intentionally addressed by mentors, while considering the specific psychosocial needs of belonging and advocacy. These functions include mentor role modeling, counseling, acceptance, confirmation, and friendship.

Overall, our recommendation is that foreign-born faculty members have access to effective mentoring that supports their career and psychosocial development through all career functions. We suggest that mentoring to meet career and personal development goals be intentionally developed to strengthen mentees' resilience. Mentors and sponsors can intentionally provide opportunities where mentees can demonstrate skills and receive feedback that increases their competency, confidence, connections, character, contributions, coping, and control (Ginsberg, 2011).

We also recommend that new mentoring

programs be designed to develop specific strategies and skills. Mentors can learn how and why to look beyond a foreign-born mentee's initial request to address developmental needs. Mentors can learn ways to consider addressing barriers that thwart a mentee's ability to advance professionally. More mentors with these skills can help foreign-born faculty belong, by being allies who advocate for them, especially when mentors serve as sponsors and developers (Murphy & Kram, 2014).

Recommendations for Further Research

In considering future research, we suggest that additional studies explore our research questions with male mentees or with a combination of American-born and foreign-born participants, for the sake of comparison. One benefit of this comparison may be identifying the unique needs each of these participant groups may have, which can inform expectations for resilience outcomes as well as mentoring practices leading to resilience.

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