

Thriving vs surviving: benefits of formal mentoring program on faculty well-being

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to describe current challenges faced by women and underrepresented minority faculty members, the benefits of mentoring programs, conceptual frameworks that highlight a wellness model and mentoring relationships and the findings from a mixed methods evaluation of a formal mentoring program (EMPOWER) that highlights the indirect benefits of such a program and the impact on faculty well-being.

Design/methodology/approach – This study was based on grounded theory, in which analysis was ongoing as data were collected and a variety of methods were used to building understanding. Measures included a survey and semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted utilizing the constant comparative method. Descriptive statistics were calculated for quantitative data.

Findings – Findings focus on the indirect benefits of EMPOWER including creation of a safe space, continued relationships between mentees and mentors, networking benefits, acculturation to the campus and a better understanding of organizational politics and how these can positively impact faculty well-being.

Originality/value – The benefits of this formal mentoring program, and the impact on faculty well-being, are important to acknowledge, understand and share with the broader research community and other institutions of higher education.

Keywords Relationships, Well-being, Faculty development, EMPOWER, Faculty vitality, Formal mentoring program, Minoritized faculty, URM faculty, Women faculty

Paper type Research paper

Introduction/Purpose

Supportive faculty mentoring programs can help promote well-being among women and underrepresented minority (URM) faculty members. Mentoring programs, such as the Enhanced Mentoring Program with Opportunities for Ways to Excel in Research (EMPOWER), provide a space for socialization and development of productive researchers and scholars, growth of professional identity and enhancement of well-being. EMPOWER supports faculty who are historically underrepresented and/or excluded populations in their



discipline or area of scholarship to become successful in sponsored research and scholarly activity and to achieve significant professional growth and advancement. EMPOWER is a program that is housed at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis, the urban research university in Indiana. For the purpose of this paper, well-being is defined as decreased emotional exhaustion, lower depersonalization and higher personal accomplishment (Eckleberry-Hunt *et al.*, 2009).

The challenges and tensions marginalized faculty often face can lead to challenging work environments and can decrease the likelihood of recruitment and retention. EMPOWER assists participants as they navigate and negotiate these complexities by offering a strategic formal mentoring program that centers on these issues and supports participants in both professional and personal capacities. This type of holistic development program helps faculty members to feel connected to the institution and increases well-being and resiliency. This paper describes current challenges facing women and URM faculty members, the benefits of mentoring programs, conceptual frameworks that highlight a well-being model and mentoring relationships and the findings from a mixed methods study of EMPOWER that highlight the indirect benefits of such a program and the impact on faculty well-being.

Conceptual framework

This study incorporates two conceptual frameworks: wellness conceptual framework (Dunn *et al.*, 2007) and relational systems theory (Kahn, 1998, 2001). Together, these frameworks contribute to a more holistic understanding of how formal faculty mentoring programs can reduce burnout and increase resiliency and well-being. While both theories acknowledge the role of the individual, they also place emphasis on the role of the organization to promote systems and programs that support the well-being of faculty and other members of the community.

Well-being conceptual framework

Rooted in academic medicine, Dunn *et al.* (2007) developed a model of physician well-being. Adopted for this study, Dunn's framework provides an understanding of organizational interventions, such as mentoring, and the impact on individual faculty members' well-being. This model comprises three core principles: control, order and meaning (see Figure 1).

Together, these principles impact the expected well-being of faculty members. The control principle represents the influence and autonomy a faculty member has over their work environment and how they spend their time. Order is the degree of efficiency (e.g. reduced administrative burden) a faculty member has. Meaning is defined as the satisfaction a faculty member gains from their work. Together, control, order and meaning help improve faculty members' satisfaction, reduce burnout and improve organizational health. Dunn and colleagues (2008) also recognized how mentorship helps faculty members cope with the stresses of academia and ultimately experience resilience (see Figure 2).

Mentorship, as well as other positive factors including psychosocial support, social/healthy activities and intellectual stimulation, can help to mitigate barriers to success (e.g. stress, time and energy demands).

Relational systems theory

Relational systems theory (Kahn, 1998, 2001) explains the role of relationships within organizational life. In this study, this theory provides a framework for understanding the mentoring experiences of women and URM faculty. The theory is based upon two key propositions: the presence of anchoring relationships and holding behaviors. Anchoring relationships are defined as strong emotional bonds that "anchor" employees to their

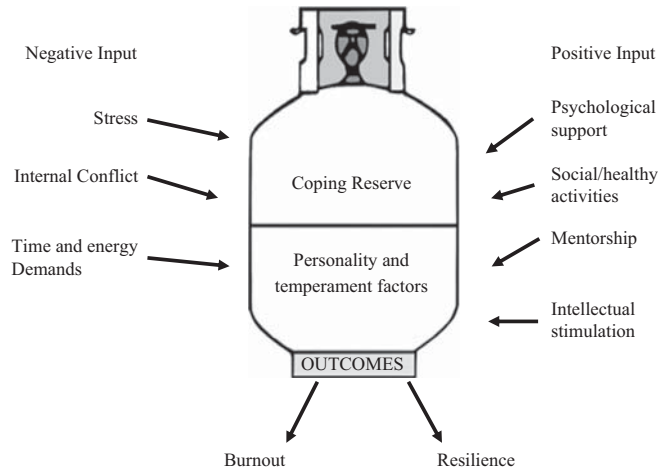


Figure 1.
Conceptual model:
coping tank reserve

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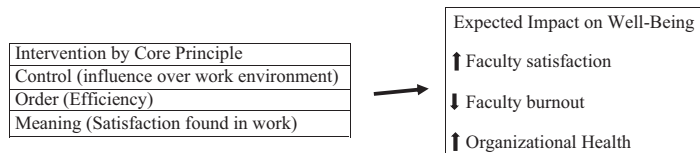


Figure 2.
Organizational
interventions and
expected impact on
well-being

Source: Adapted by permission from Springer Nature Customer Service Centre GmbH: Springer Nature, *Academic Psychiatry* (A Conceptual Model of Medical Student Well-Being: Promoting Resilience and Preventing Burnout, Dunn *et al.*) Copyright (2007)

organizations and help in maintaining organizational commitment in the face of anxiety-producing events. Holding behaviors are defined as intentional behaviors that provide containment (safe space), empathic acknowledgment and enabling perspectives. Mentors can build holding behaviors by providing their mentees with safe spaces to share their experiences and concerns, providing empathic knowledge to validate feelings of inadequacy and/or conflict, and offering nonjudgmental perspectives to rebuild the mentee's ego.

Literature review

In the literature, a variety of barriers related to faculty well-being are addressed. This review of the literature focused on five key areas: barriers to well-being, challenges facing women in academia, challenges facing URM faculty in academia, benefits of mentoring for women and URM faculty and benefits of mentoring for mentors. Literature was examined from a variety of fields including education, industrial/organizational psychology and academic medicine to better understand the needs of women and URM faculty, as well as the individual and systemic barriers they face.

Barriers to well-being

Burnout is well defined in the literature as a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased feelings of personal accomplishment (Pines and Aronson, 1988). Burnout affects all professions but tends to be more pervasive in human service occupations, such as education. While much of the literature on faculty well-being and burnout comes from academic medicine and industrial/organizational psychology, this phenomenon is experienced by individuals across employment sectors and is not isolated or unique to higher education. Likewise, this work will translate to other fields.

Symptoms of burnout include dissatisfaction, negativism, boredom, unpreparedness, testiness, frequent illness, forgetfulness, depression and tiredness (Eastman, 1996). When discussing strategies for preventing burnout in a college/university setting, four broad categories require consideration: managing time, managing space, managing people and managing physical well-being. In order to reduce burnout, individuals must identify aspects of their professional lives that contribute to excessive stress and which provide satisfaction and promote feelings of accomplishment (Eastman, 1996). Organizations should administer self-assessments to help faculty members recognize sources of stress and to identify individuals who may be burned out. Once identified, faculty should seek ways to prevent or diminish them by achieving and maintaining a balance among their spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual and physical well-being (Eastman, 1996). Organizations also play an important role in this process to reduce organization stressors.

A focus on well-being can lessen or prevent burnout (Eastman, 1996). Temporary burnout, including emotional and physical exhaustion, is perhaps inevitable over the course of an academic career. However, efforts can be made by institutions of higher education to ensure that all employees, especially women and URM faculty, are provided the resources and support they need. There have been published efforts to boost well-being through self-reflective practice; workshops, lectures and support groups; and other multidimensional programs (McCray *et al.*, 2008). Mentors are one example of a positive input for junior faculty. Not only can these individuals help mentor and support junior colleagues with their research, but they can also discuss topics of well-being, such as feelings of insecurity, celebrating accomplishments, handling errors, and burnout (Eckleberry-Hunt *et al.*, 2009). Mentors also model the human side of the professoriate.

Challenges facing women in academia

The retention and promotion of women faculty in academia has long been an area of national concern (Gardner, 2013). To begin, “academia has traditionally been a highly male-dominated and gender-segregated” occupation (Maranto and Griffin, 2011, p. 140). Compared to their male peers, women faculty are more likely to report feelings of isolation and invisibility in their departments, especially within the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2015; Bilimoria *et al.*, 2008; Liang and Bilimoria, 2007). Another contributor to feelings of isolation include women faculty not being involved or invited to join committees where high-level decision-making occurs (August and Waltman, 2004). Women faculty have reported higher stress levels due to having to work harder than their male peers to receive creditability for their work and contributions (Diehl and Dzubinski, 2016), heavier teaching loads (Gardner, 2013; Misra *et al.*, 2011), and receiving less pay than their male counterparts (August and Waltman, 2004; Lodish, 2015). Women faculty also report a lack of individuals willing to provide career advice or mentoring as barriers toward their professional growth and success (Hewlett *et al.*, 2010).

In academia, the model for the “ideal worker” is one who is dedicated, undistracted and constantly working (Williams, 2001). Research has examined barriers women faculty

experience related to work/life balance and how starting a family can be a cumulative disadvantage, particularly as it relates to the typical timeframe for advancing in a tenure track career path (Blood *et al.*, 2012; Lodish, 2015). Academic institutions tend to be less friendly to women faculty due to the increasing demands of faculty to produce scholarship and maintain a high teaching load, resulting in a lack of balance between work and family (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2005; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2006).

Challenges facing URM faculty in academia

To understand how mentoring can be an effective tool in addressing and overcoming the issues listed above, it is essential to recognize the unique cultural identities and experiences of URM faculty in higher education institutions. To begin, URM and women faculty are confronted with the stress of performing their social and cultural identities carefully and selectively to avoid being criticized, marginalized, dismissed or rejected by colleagues and students (Marbley *et al.*, 2011; Trinh Võ, 2012). A barrier commonly reported by URM faculty is feelings of marginalization and isolation. By definition, URM faculty suffer from isolation due to the lack of other faculty and mentors available from their own race and backgrounds, resulting in feelings of being the “only one” or “an outsider” (Bilimoria *et al.*, 2008; Garrison-Wade *et al.*, 2012; Patton, 2009). Feelings of isolation may stem from the lack of effective mentors (particularly mentoring from other URM faculty), the burden of representing their whole race (Pololi *et al.*, 2010), and feeling uninformed and unsupported. Feelings of isolation have also been reported among women of color in male-dominated fields where one may be not just the only woman, but also the only woman of color (Bilimoria *et al.*, 2008; Marbley *et al.*, 2011).

URM faculty have reported suffering from the pressures of “cultural taxation,” where they are given heavier workloads, in comparison to their majority counterparts, in an effort for their institution to demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and diversity (Johnson and Lucero, 2003; Rocquemore and Laszloffy, 2008). Additional URM faculty roles may include advising minority students, serving on numerous committees and participating in outreach programs (Conway-Jones, 2006) while having to manage their teaching and research roles (Johnson and Lucero, 2003). Another barrier experienced by URM faculty includes feeling that, compared to their majority peers, their scholarly work is not treated with the same level of importance (Garrison-Wade *et al.*, 2012), their legitimacy as academics is often questioned, and their contributions to the academy are not recognized. This leads some URM faculty to believe they are being used by their institution as “token” or “affirmative action hires” (Zambrana *et al.*, 2015, p. 53).

It is essential to note how URM and women faculty members’ intersecting identities influence their experiences and perceptions of barriers in academia and the potential impact on retention (Armstrong and Jovanovic, 2015; Zambrana, 2018). Intersectionality focuses on the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and so on, intersect at both the micro and macro levels of personal and social experiences (Bowleg, 2008). Literature shows that URM and women faculty often experience academia as an unwelcoming environment, and that this level of discomfort may vary based on the intersections of race, sex, class and gender (Zambrana *et al.*, 2017). These intersections shape URM and women faculty’s multiple identities, the social perceptions of these individuals by others (i.e. stereotypes), and the dominant power relations that influence their experiences (Espino, 2012). By examining these intersecting identities, we can move toward better articulating and assisting the “invisible” position of people who experience multiple disadvantaged statuses (Lewis *et al.*, 2015, p. 5).

While the urgency of addressing multiple marginalities intensifies, institutional reforms for addressing climate change tend to focus on an individual’s racial/ethnic or

gender identity without considering the multidirectional influence of multiple identities on shaping individuals' experiences. As Armstrong and Jovanovic (2015) suggest:

The lack of progress among URM and women faculty in academia results from the kinds of issues and challenges that emerge when conceptual and data-collection structures fail to take into account the forms of disadvantage experienced by persons who are characterized by multiple subordinated identities. (p. 145)

Benefits of mentoring for women and URM faculty

Mentoring research has explored the benefits of women having a “constellation” of developmental relationships (mentoring, coaching and sponsoring) regarding their leadership development journeys. Such relationships within these networks of mentoring relationships provide “developmental assistance” that involves both career and psychosocial support (Higgins and Kram, 2001, p. 267). While there are multiple definitions of the role and practice of mentors, the literature reveals a common set of mentoring characteristics: mentoring involves mutual social exchange and consistent interaction, and results in developmental benefits related to the protégé’s career (Haggard *et al.*, 2011). Among mentors of women, this includes helping mentees integrate their personalities and professional experiences to better situate them within their disciplines (Patton, 2009), finding effective methods toward dealing with issues specific to gender, informing them of the organizational politics of the academic environment and affirming one’s worth (Thomas *et al.*, 2015).

Effective mentoring is critical throughout the academic and career advancement of junior URM faculty to enhance their educational access, persistence and career advancement (Nakamura *et al.*, 2009; Zambrana *et al.*, 2015). Mentoring programs for URM faculty have reported mentors provide numerous benefits such as providing emotional support and accountability, understanding and identifying systems of oppression and inequality, and overcoming the fear of being affirmative action hires who are recognized for their addition to diversity and not the merit of their work (Zambrana *et al.*, 2015).

Benefits of mentoring for mentors

It is important to examine not only the potential benefits for mentees but also the benefits for mentors participating in mentoring programs. In the best of circumstances, the process of mentoring is a mutually beneficial experience to both the mentor and mentee (Pololi and Knight, 2005) and provides an emphatic experience of closeness, openness, care and vulnerability (Ragins, 2016). Studies have found mentors engaging in mentoring programs reported increased senior and emeriti faculty productivity, stability and the opportunity to support and develop relationships with the next generation of leaders (Pololi and Knight, 2005). Further, by focusing on mentoring junior faculty and supporting them, senior faculty can help establish realistic beliefs about their position, help to lower stress levels and possibly contribute to an increase in overall well-being (Wester *et al.*, 2009).

EMPOWER program

Genesis of EMPOWER

When discussions began in 2011 between the Office for Women (OFW) and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (OVCR) about addressing the needs of women faculty, internal data from the university indicated that in 2010, only 22 percent of full professors were women and constituted 30 percent of the tenured faculty at the urban campus.

In seeking ideas to address these issues, the OFW and the OVCR convened a focus group of senior women faculty in the spring of 2011. The participants discussed how the

university could increase the participation of women faculty in research activities and support women in advancing their careers. The top request from the women was mentoring. Another concern for the campus was the retention of URM faculty. Although the percentage of URM faculty on campus matched the national average, recent turnover of recruited URM faculty was noted.

Subsequently, the OVCR and OFW developed an enhanced mentoring program for women and URM faculty. This program, known as EMPOWER, paired assistant professors with tenured associate professors (or above), and associate professors with full professors, for a calendar year to assist them in developing an agenda for research or creative activity with the aim of applying for external funding. The mentee component of EMPOWER targets URM populations and women, and the mentor component includes all populations.

Program objectives

The desired outcomes for the mentees were: to become more productive researchers and scholars, to be promoted and tenured and to pursue and receive external funding for their research and scholarship. It was expected that benefits for mentors would include the financial incentive of professional development funding and fulfilling their service role as colleagues and faculty citizens. Additional benefits included the synergy of working with generationally diverse colleagues and sometimes discipline diverse colleagues and learning new technologies or theories.

Implementation of program

Full-time tenure-eligible assistant professors and untenured associate professors who are historically underrepresented and/or excluded populations in their discipline or area of scholarship and historically denied admission to higher education or that discipline, from all campus schools and units, are eligible to apply as mentees. All full-time tenured associate professors or full professors from all schools and units are eligible to apply as mentors.

Mentees receive an award of up to \$5,000 to support research and creative activities, as well as support professional development. Mentors receive one allocation of \$1,000 at the beginning of the program for professional development. The duration for EMPOWER participation is one year for the formal mentor/mentee relationship. One activity that must be completed, because of the mentoring experience, is a proposal submission to an external funding agency.

Methodology

The guiding approach for the processes and products of this mixed methods study was based on grounded theory, in which analysis was ongoing as data were collected and a variety of methods were used to build understanding (Creswell, 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The evaluation used multiple measures including a survey, semi-structured interviews and semi-structured focus groups to examine the implementation and outcomes of EMPOWER. This mixed methods evaluation design allows for stronger validity in interpretations of data through the use of triangulation of multiple methods and sources, and detailed elaboration upon quantitative findings through qualitative analysis. Additionally, the discovery of contradictory findings that provide nuance and suggest future questions for further evaluation is a strength of this experimental design (Greene *et al.*, 1989).

Participants

The evaluation focused on 118 individuals from five cohorts (2011–2016) who participated in EMPOWER. Of the 118 total participants, 83 (70.3 percent) were female and 34 (28.8 percent) were male. In total, 81 percent of mentees were female and 19 percent were male, while

56 percent of mentors were female, and 44 percent were male. The ethnicity of the mentees was 38 percent White, 31 percent Asian, 21 percent Black/African American, 6 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 4 percent two or more races. The ethnicity of the mentors was 82 percent White, 8 percent Asian, 8 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 2 percent Black/African American. Nearly two-thirds (61.7 percent) of participants self-selected their mentor/mentee as part of the application process. The remaining matches were heavily dependent on the program leaderships' connection to a diverse group of potential mentors across the university who had the skill set and temperament needed for an effective mentoring experience. The objectives of the match were not necessarily based on ethnic or gender similarities, but rather the research and development needs of the mentees. Participants represented 16 different schools across the campus including, but not limited to, education, engineering and technology, public health, informatics and computing, liberal arts, medicine and science.

In total, 44 (37.3 percent) individuals (mentors and mentees) completed a survey that was distributed in July 2017. In total, 15 (34.9 percent) males and 28 (65.1 percent) females completed the survey, and 25 mentees and 19 mentors (three who had mentored twice) completed the survey.

Measures

Survey. Surveys were completed by mentees and mentors in the summer of 2017. The survey consisted of seven demographic items, 14 Likert scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Disagree/Nor Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, and na) pertaining to participants' experiences and outcomes related to participation in EMPOWER, 11 items related to the EMPOWER mentor/mentee matching and current/previous mentoring experiences, and four open-ended items. Sample items included "Participation in EMPOWER helped me be successful in pursuing sponsored research or external funding" and "Participation in EMPOWER helped me achieve professional growth and advancement." Open-ended items included "Please describe what you believe was the most rewarding aspect of your participation in this program" and "Please describe any challenges you encountered while participating in this program."

Focus groups. Two ($n = 5$) focus groups, which lasted approximately 45 min each, were conducted in September and October of 2017 with mentors. They were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Sample focus group questions included "Describe your experience with EMPOWER" and "Describe your relationship with your mentee."

Interviews. Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2017 with eight EMPOWER mentees. They lasted approximately from 30 to 45 min and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Sample interview questions included "Describe your successes or accomplishments since participation in EMPOWER" and "How satisfied were you with your mentor?"

Analysis

Throughout analysis, evaluators consistently engaged in self-reflective practices and challenged one another during the coding process regarding assumptions, biases and prior knowledge that were important to recognize and set aside but not abandon (Starks and Trinidad, 2007).

Qualitative data included interviews, focus groups and open-ended survey responses. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted utilizing the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Researchers applied codes representing the sentiment of each paragraph or data cluster and/or developed codes identifying patterns that emerged from the data (Creswell, 2008). NVivo 11 qualitative research software was utilized for the coding of themes and reporting prevalence of codes

and themes. As a group, the team met to discuss the relationships among codes and to combine similar codes into broader patterns or themes. Next, they divided into groups to return to the original data sources to identify representative examples. Finally, the entire team met to share findings, which resulted in the creation of specific themes for coding all sources of qualitative data. This type of cooperative relationship creates better overall understanding of the data and leads to more valid conclusions (Creswell, 2007).

Quantitative data included participants' responses to the survey. Descriptive statistics including means, frequencies and standard deviations of respondents' answers were calculated.

Findings

In addition to the direct benefits of a structured/formalized mentoring program, such as career advancement and increase in scholarly activity and sponsored research/external funding, participants identified various indirect benefits of participation in EMPOWER. For the purposes of this paper, the indirect benefits and the connection to faculty well-being are explored. Indirect benefits included the creation of a safe space, continued relationships between mentees and mentors, networking benefits, acculturation to the campus, and a better understanding of organizational politics. These indirect benefits could support the faculty member's sense of control, order, and meaning and thus contribute to a sense of well-being. While the majority of the findings listed below could include more than one of the principles identified in the wellness model presented by Dunn *et al.* (2007), we have conceptualized these specific indirect benefits in the following ways:

- (1) Having a safe space enables faculty members to experience satisfaction and a sense of meaning in their profession by providing an environment where they feel comfortable (Meaning).
- (2) Continuing relationships between the mentor and mentee allow both individuals to use one another as a sounding board and increase efficiency. In addition, as with the creation of a safe space on campus, these continued relationships provide faculty with a sense of meaning and satisfaction (Meaning and Order).
- (3) Networking within and across departments and other institutions of higher education also assists with order and making meaning of one's work (Meaning and Order).
- (4) Similar to continued relationships and networking, acculturation to campus provides faculty with the opportunity to create order and better understand how to decrease administrative burden, as well as find meaning in their work (Meaning and Order).
- (5) Understanding the organizational politics of individual schools/departments and the university assists faculty in better understanding their environment and determining how they spend their time (Control).

Safe space

Participants often described EMPOWER and the mentor/mentee relationship as a "safe space." Mentors and mentees alike appreciated the opportunity EMPOWER afforded them to discuss areas they were struggling with related to promotion, colleagues or personal and professional well-being. One mentor explained:

He used to joke that this was his safe space to come and talk about career issues. He could talk about other people, or he could talk with other people about his discipline and his articles and where he should publish and that sort of thing. But with me he could sit and I don't want to say strategize but think more intentionally about his role in that school and how best to set himself up for success on campus more generally.

Mentees described the mentoring relationship in the following ways: “I think having a trusted senior colleague. Just that safe space that we mentioned and just someone to bounce ideas off of” and “The trust that develops, allowing both people to open up about their experiences, hopes, fears, expectations.”

Having this safe space also allowed mentees to open up regarding areas in which they felt they were struggling. One mentee stated that it was beneficial to know that the struggles she experienced were struggles others experienced as well:

And just to hear from your mentor that this is not something that I’m going through. Everybody went through the same thing or everybody goes through the same thing. Don’t feel that you are not good enough or you are not on your track or anything like that. This is the path everybody has to go through. That was good to hear.

These descriptions of safe space exemplify the holding behavior described in relational systems theory (Kahn, 1998, 2001).

Continued relationship

The majority of mentor/mentee pairs (83 percent) that completed the survey continued their relationships past the formal one-year participation in EMPOWER (see full survey results in Table A1). Participants reported long-term mentorship beyond EMPOWER. In addition, others described a professional relationship that also turned into a friendship: “I mean I’m lucky that this one mentee has given me a lot of [...] resources but we enjoy each other’s company quite a bit.” Another mentor described her relationship with mentees in this way: “Even the very first person that I worked with, like I said now I think it is more you know we’ve become friends and it is more emotional support but I find that we do almost the same thing.” One mentor discussed how he typically shared a challenge he was facing toward the end of the year with his mentee, and told him, “You may see me as a mentor but on this campus we are very much equals and I value what you think. I think that is one reason why they want to keep meeting.” These emotional bonds “anchor” faculty to their school/department/university and assist with retention of women and URM faculty.

Several mentors felt the mentor/mentee relationship was mutually beneficial. One mentor reported, “I grew in a number of ways so it was very beneficial to me,” while another said, “I’ve got to say I feel like I got every bit as much as I might have given.” However, others felt that this program was more of a service and strictly benefited the mentees. One mentor stated:

I see mentoring as me serving them not a partnership. I feel [mentoring] is a service. It doesn’t take too much time so it doesn’t negatively impact anything that I do [...] I may have been taking the wrong approach this whole time but I’m not looking to get anything out of this.

Overall, whether both individuals in the mentorship pair felt the relationship was beneficial, multiple mentors agreed that EMPOWER provided a space for them to help build the campus more broadly. One mentor shared, “There is a strong sense I think that this is helping to build our campus more generally not just helping some people out.” This conclusion, as well as others mentioned above, speaks to the benefits of the program as an explicit investment in human capital.

Networking

Networking was one of the most highly discussed indirect benefits of participation in EMPOWER. Mentors and mentees alike benefited from the relationships they developed not only with one another, but also with colleagues in other departments across campus. Typically, mentors, who had more connections across campus, were able to connect mentees

with individuals who shared similar interests; however, there were multiple instances when mentees were able to introduce their mentors to individuals within the campus, at other university campuses, or the local community. As one mentee stated:

Now I have two mentors and they didn't know each other before and now they are friends. They do work together now. They are both on all of my grants and publications that they've helped me with. It has actually helped bridge a lot of relationships.

Being able to create, maintain and expand their professional relationships and network was an important benefit. One mentee stated:

And then to be connected, I mean these are high level people so right off the bat to be connected to people that have generated the reputation that they have in their fields and have produced the amount of research that they have is very like, that felt good. It felt like I was being treated like I was important. That is important.

Generally, mentees felt that the individuals their mentors introduced them to were helpful, and several ultimately ended up publishing, writing external grants, and collaborating on research projects. Others were not always able to make these concrete connections but felt that they benefited in other less direct ways from these contacts. One mentee described this the following way: "But you know the more people who you know and who know you, the closer you get to finding people you might actually collaborate with eventually. Even if the first people you meet are not exactly the right match."

The ability to network within EMPOWER was also something that benefited participants. While there were only a couple of formal group interactions, several mentees felt they were able to connect with other mentees in the program and build a supportive community, as exhibited by the following quotation:

The other junior faculty and hear them going through the same struggles that I am. Not because I want them to suffer but because I know I'm not suffering alone. That was nice. It kind of gave us a forum where we could speak freely and openly and be understood.

In total, 64 percent ($N=16$) of mentees and 38 percent ($N=8$) of mentors rated the survey item "The program helped me make connections to colleagues in other departments" as Agree or Strongly Agree ($M=3.96$ and $M=3.24$, respectively). In addition, 75 percent ($N=18$) of mentees and 61 percent ($N=14$) of mentors rated the survey item "The opportunities to meet with the larger group in person were valuable" as Agree or Strongly Agree ($M=4.07$ and $M=3.80$, respectively).

Acculturation to campus

Acculturation to campus was another indirect benefit identified by participants to reduce feelings of isolation. This included connecting with and recognizing others on campus and feeling connected to the campus community. One participant explained this the following way: "I didn't even really know, anything I learned about who was doing what on campus at the time was through my mentor. Because she was my first conduit to narrowing down a big world into a smaller one." Another mentee shared that the most rewarding aspect of EMPOWER was "feeling more connected to faculty community."

One mentee recommended that continuing to increase the visibility of EMPOWER would be beneficial, as she viewed the program as an opportunity to acclimate faculty to campus: "Such programming can really help people who feel like they are outsiders and bring them more into the fold. I think making it more accessible I think."

In total, 88 percent ($N=22$) of mentees rated the survey item "As a new faculty member, this program helped me feel welcomed and/or acclimated to the campus" as Agree or Strongly Agree ($M=4.50$).

Organizational politics

In addition to the indirect benefits listed above, mentors and mentees described the importance of understanding the organizational politics within specific departments and the campus as a whole. One mentee described how this benefited her:

It came with understanding what I didn't know that my mentor helped me to understand and to see. There is always politics. There is always undercurrent where the bones are buried kind of phrase that you don't know and mentors have a way of helping you to see those while recognizing a path less traveled where others have been successful given all of those nuances. I loved EMPOWER for that because I was able to see those and therefore carve out a clear path for my promotion and tenure.

Understanding these organizational politics was also useful as it related to different ways of communicating across cultures, as the following quotation demonstrates:

I'm used to a more direct way of interacting with people so it was harder to understand what people or faculty wanted from me. She was able to kind of say well this is how people say this. This is how this happens. That is very helpful situation for somebody like me who is culturally so different.

Another mentee stated, "Those sort of morsels of information for me was a good 90% win from just being a part of EMPOWER. Which would not have taken place outside of that structure."

Understanding the organizational politics surrounding promotion and tenure helped one mentor assist her mentee:

The first person that I mentored it was also a joint appointment and those are always very tricky to navigate. Things got very political with her promotion as well. And so I felt like I could be that safe space for her. She really needed it at that time and luckily everything worked [...] It did get very political and I think having the support of someone completely removed from her school, completely removed from that line of work and certainly I wasn't the only one. There were a lot of people that were able to provide that for her but it ended up working out really well.

These "insider secrets" and "tricks of the trade" were invaluable to mentees. In fact, several described this information as the most beneficial aspect of their participation in EMPOWER.

Discussion

In recent years, the conversation around well-being and burnout has moved from an individual problem to an organizational challenge. Eastman (1996) suggested that a focus on well-being could lessen or even prevent burnout. The benefits associated with participation in EMPOWER were evident, and involvement in this type of faculty mentoring program provided many of the resources necessary to improve women and URM faculty well-being at institutions of higher education (Wester *et al.*, 2009). While the original intention of EMPOWER was to foster research productivity among women and URM faculty, some of the most significant findings indicated the importance of faculty well-being. These indirect benefits acknowledged by participants (safe space, continued relationships, networking, acculturation to campus and understanding organizational politics) directly relate to how formal mentoring programs such as EMPOWER provide many of the resources associated with increasing and promoting faculty well-being. Our study supports the findings of other researchers (e.g. Gardner, 2013; Maranto and Griffin, 2011) with regard to the challenges that women and URM faculty face in academia and what is known about the benefits of mentoring for these populations. EMPOWER is one example of ways that institutions of higher education can provide a space for socialization, development, and well-being of women and URM faculty.

Conclusion

Significant research literature indicates that formal mentoring programs are particularly beneficial for women and URM faculty (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). Such programs could mean the difference between success and failure for early career faculty, who find themselves navigating the complex and sometimes political terrains of the academy, as they seek to build a robust research portfolio and advance to full professorship. This type of intentional mentoring program that gives mentees, who are from underrepresented populations, the opportunity to learn from and network with mentors and leaders across the university is rare because of the program focus on the mentees' research agenda and productivity. Additionally, the indirect benefits of this program, and the impact on faculty well-being, are important to acknowledge, understand and share with the broader research community and other institutions of higher education.

Although overt discrimination and discrimination based on sex is illegal in many countries and institutions of higher education, systemic and institutional barriers still exist for women and underrepresented minorities. Other covert barriers such as unconscious bias, exclusion, hostile environments and microaggressions persist and must be addressed by institutions. The cumulative impact of unconscious bias on opportunity and advancement, the exclusion from informal networks of information and power, the isolation and pressure of "tokenism," and the organizational structure ordered around male norms are a few of these barriers that organizations can address through direct action and programming. Faculty mentoring programs for historically excluded or underrepresented populations that focus on professional growth and success can also meet individual relational needs promoting well-being by providing "safe spaces" and "holding" environments. Institutional support for programs such as EMPOWER help to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and signal to the community that diversity is a key value of the institution.

In contrast to the focus of previous literature, the current study looked at the experience in terms of how to support women and URM faculty to increase promotion and tenure rates and research funding. The key implications of this study can be summarized as follows: support of institutional leaders is crucial; adding funding and scholarship components to mentoring programs help increase mentees publishing, external grants and collaborative projects; and there is a mutual benefit for mentors and mentees. This program was able to exist, both in regard to human resources and financial resources, due to support from all levels of the university administration. In developing this program, it was important to have data about the institution: promotion and tenure rates and external funding by gender and race. Moving forward, collecting and sharing data on these two metrics has helped to keep institutional funding since the program's inception. To that end, providing funding and setting expectations for scholarly work has been a mutual benefit to the institution and participants of the program. Finally, both mentors and mentees shared benefits they received from being in this mentoring program.

Implications for future research

This research focused solely on the experience of women and URM faculty in a structured mentoring program. The current study, which focused on a small sample of women and URM faculty who participated in the EMPOWER program, found that these individuals experienced a variety of direct and indirect benefits. Further research recommended to explore the connection between two individuals is seen as critical in the success of the mentoring relationships. In the EMPOWER program, the facilitators were intentional in pairing mentors and mentees. Future research on the pairing process would lend additional insight into the establishment and maintenance of these relationships.

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Appendix

Table AI.
Mentee and mentor
survey responses

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree/nor Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	na	M (SD)
<i>Mentee only items</i>							
Participation in the EMPOWER Program helped me be successful in pursuing sponsored research or external funding	0	2 (8.0%)	2 (8.0%)	9 (36.0%)	10 (40.0%)	2 (8.0%)	4.17 (0.937)
Participation in the EMPOWER Program improved my productivity of scholarly activity	0	2 (8.0%)	1 (4.0%)	13 (52.0%)	8 (32.0%)	1 (4.0%)	4.13 (0.850)
Participation in the EMPOWER Program helped me achieve professional growth and advancement	0	1 (4.0%)	2 (8.0%)	9 (36.0%)	12 (48.0%)	1 (4.0%)	4.33 (0.817)
As a new faculty member, this program helped me feel welcomed and/or acclimated to the campus	0	1 (4.0%)	1 (4.0%)	7 (28.0%)	15 (60.0%)	1 (4.0%)	4.50 (0.780)
<i>Mentor only items</i>							
My mentee received my support, input, and feedback positively	0	0	0	2 (9.5%)	19 (90.5%)	0	4.90 (0.301)
I was able to provide my mentee with constructive feedback	0	0	0	4 (19.0%)	17 (81.0%)	0	4.81 (0.402)
I have grown and developed as a mentor	0	0	2 (9.5%)	7 (33.3%)	11 (52.4%)	1 (4.8%)	4.45 (0.686)
This program contributed to my career advancement	0	4 (19.0%)	7 (33.3%)	4 (19.0%)	2 (9.5%)	4 (19.0%)	3.24 (0.970)
The program improved my sponsored research capacity	0	10 (47.6%)	6 (28.6%)	4 (19.0%)	0	1 (4.8%)	2.70 (0.801)
The program improved my scholarly activity	0	6 (28.6%)	6 (28.6%)	7 (33.3%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	3.15 (0.933)
<i>Mentor and mentee items</i>							
The expectations that I had before beginning the EMPOWER Program were realized during and after participation in the program	Mentee 0	4 (16.0%)	3 (12.0%)	9 (36.0%)	7 (28.0%)	2 (8.0%)	3.83 (1.07)
I was able to meet with my mentor/mentee on a consistent basis	Mentor 0	0	0	7 (33.3%)	13 (61.9%)	1 (4.8%)	4.65 (0.489)
I believe I contributed to my mentor/mentee's growth	Mentee 1 (4.0%)	1 (4.0%)	1 (4.0%)	10 (40.0%)	12 (48.0%)	0	4.24 (1.01)
	Mentor 0	0	0	5 (23.8%)	16 (76.2%)	0	4.76 (0.436)
	Mentee 1 (4.0%)	7 (28.0%)	5 (20.0%)	9 (36.0%)	3 (12.0%)	0	3.24 (1.13)
	Mentor 0	0	2 (9.5%)	7 (33.3%)	12 (57.1%)	0	4.48 (0.680)

(continued)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree/nor Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	na	M (SD)
The program improved my understanding of resources available to me on campus	Mentee 0	1 (4.0%)	3 (12.0%)	11 (44.0%)	10 (40.0%)	0	4.20 (0.817)
This program helped me make connections to colleagues in other departments	Mentor 1 (4.8%)	0	10 (47.6%)	9 (42.9%)	1 (4.8%)	0	3.43 (0.811)
	Mentee 0	2 (8.0%)	6 (24.0%)	7 (28.0%)	9 (36.0%)	1 (4.0%)	3.96 (0.999)
I would recommend the EMPOWER Program to colleagues based on my experiences	Mentor 1 (4.8%)	3 (14.3%)	9 (42.9%)	6 (28.6%)	2 (9.5%)	0	3.24 (0.995)
	Mentee 0	0	2 (8.0%)	4 (16.0%)	18 (72.0%)	1 (4.0%)	4.67 (0.637)
	Mentor 0	0	0	5 (23.8%)	15 (71.4%)	1 (4.8%)	4.75 (0.444)

Table AI.

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