

# Diversity challenges facing expatriate and immigrant mothers and how group mentoring can influence them: A case study of a mentoring scheme within a Christian organisation in the United Kingdom

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## Abstract

The current upward trend in immigration in the UK suggests that organisations will increasingly encounter people facing diversity challenges relating to gender, culture and religion which could be influenced by mentoring. Using a case study approach, this study explores the influence of mentoring on Christian mothers from an African background in dealing with their challenges. The findings suggest that the participants experience both value conflict and role conflict challenges and that mentoring has a direct influence on how they deal with practical challenges and also an influence on their mind-set which indirectly influences their challenges in every area of life.

**Keywords:** Group Mentoring, diversity, mothers, faith, culture

## Introduction

Immigration to the United Kingdom has steadily increased over the past few years. According to the office for national statistics, net migration increased by up to 94,000 between 2014 and 2015 and foreign nationals accounted for about three-quarters of the growth in employment (Office for national statistics, 2015). This increasingly diversifying population suggests that organisations, communities and individuals are likely to encounter diversity related challenges that could potentially be addressed through mentoring.

The majority of the women that I have encountered in my coaching/mentoring practice have been Christian women from African ancestry and the main challenge that they have brought to the process is that of struggling to cope with multiple roles. As a member of the same demographic, I too juggle marriage, motherhood, church ministry and career in a new cultural setting, and try to balance what I feel is expected of a Christian woman in my culture with what pertains in British life. Based on my experiences and those of my clients, I suspect that as African women acculturate into western society, they may experience a conflict between the prevalent western culture of individualism which celebrates individual attainments such as career success (Olson et al., 2013); and the more collectivist and community oriented African culture which lays great emphasis on marriage and motherhood (Hofstede, 1983). The attempt to fit in with both cultures could be leading such women to adopt a lifestyle which leaves them with too many roles to juggle. My interest in mentoring and this area of research was borne out of my own search for a mentor to support me with these issues.

## *Objectives and context*

With the above in mind, this article reports on a case study that explored how mentoring influences Christian African mothers in dealing with their challenges. The three objectives of the research were:

- 1) To explore the challenges faced by Christian mothers from an African background who live in the UK;
- 2) To explore Christian African mothers' experience of a mentoring scheme within a Christian organisation in the UK;
- 3) To explore the influence that mentoring can have on these mothers in dealing with their challenges.

The findings presented relate mainly to the first and third objectives.

The setting for the case study was the Esther's Mentoring Scheme (EMS); a mentoring Scheme for women in a Protestant Pentecostal church based in London whose congregation is predominantly of African ancestry. The scheme's purpose is to support women and help them understand their worth, value, potential and purpose and these messages are grounded on the Christian faith and teachings from the Bible. EMS was initiated in 2010 and in 2014 it had about 285 alumni. The predominant demographic of participants are young women aged under 30; however, over the years, the scheme has seen older, married mentees get involved although these are a relatively small minority. The scheme runs twice a year; each semester starts with eight weeks of weekly two-hour group mentoring sessions after which participants have the option to continue with paired mentoring for an additional 6 to 12 months.

This article firstly presents the relevant literature and the methodology employed. Then the findings are discussed together with the implications of the research for the field of coaching and mentoring. Limitations and recommendations for future research are also included.

## **Literature**

The concept of Christian motherhood suggests that the motherhood role is heavily influenced by faith and the norms of the church community in which the woman lives (Phanco, 2004; Oates et al., 2008; Page, 2011; Gallagher et al., 2013). A review of existing literature indicated that for many Christian mothers, the struggle between work and the traditional homemaking role could lead to inter-role conflict amongst other challenges (Sellers et al., 2005; Oates et al., 2008; Page, 2011; Gallagher et al., 2013).

Existing literature on African mothers and other minority groups also suggested that cultural factors played a significant role in the way they experienced and responded to these conflicts (O'Neill et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2013; Adya, 2008; Moon, 2012). For example, Clark's (2000) analysis of Asante mothers from Ghana found that it was working to provide for their children, not staying home to care for them, that was their way of expressing their devotion. This is in stark contrast to the ideology of intense motherhood which is dominant in some parts of North American Christian culture, one of its tenets being that mothers assume full responsibility for childcare (Gallagher et al., 2013).

One of my major observations of the existing research highlighted above was that they were mostly based on North American samples. This revealed a shortage in research on how these conflicts could affect similar groups in the UK. Based on this, I made the decision to begin the study by first of all exploring the challenges facing Christian African mothers in the UK by raising such questions as: What are their challenges? Is inter-role conflict one of these challenges? What roles do faith and culture play in their experience? How does mentoring support these women?

### ***One-to-one (paired) and group mentoring schemes***

Existing research on mentoring to date have been largely based on the paired or grooming model which has at its heart a dyadic mentor-protégé relationship (Dansky, 1996; Eby, 1997; Wasburn, 2007; Johns and McNamara, 2014; Wasburn and Crispo, 2006; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Selzer, 2008) and some of the benefits documented included: increased job satisfaction, increased productivity, better performance, higher salaries, reduced employee turnover, stability and loyalty to the organisation (Dansky, 1996; Allen et al., 1997; Cunningham, 1999; Wasburn and Crispo, 2006; Selzer, 2008).

The benefits listed above, coupled with the impracticality of waiting for spontaneous mentoring relationships to be formed, have led many organisations to set up more formal mentoring programmes (Wasburn, 2007; Carvin, 2011). However, these formal programmes have thrown up their own unique set of challenges such as clashes in values or personalities in mentoring pairs and a shortage of appropriate mentors, especially for minority groups (Kram and Isabella, 1985; Kaye and Jacobson, 1995; Allen et al., 1997; McCormack & West, 2006; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Wasburn, 2007; Selzer, 2008; Carvin, 2011).

The literature also revealed group mentoring to be increasingly popular with organisations as an extension of, or an alternative to the more traditional one-to-one or paired model (Kay and Jacobson, 1995; Eby, 1997; Ritchie & Genoni, 2002; Carvin, 2011). There were suggestions that group mentoring provided an alternative that addressed some of the challenges associated with the one-to-one model (Carvin, 2011; Wasburn, 2007) and it was also suggested that group mentoring could be useful for targeting issues unique to women and other minority groups (McCormack & West, 2006; Wasburn, 2007; Johns and McNamara, 2014).

The existing literature on formal group mentoring schemes showed that the majority of such schemes researched were set within the context of commercial organisations (Kram and Isabella, 1985; Dansky, 1996, Wasburn and Crispo, 2006) or educational institutions (Allen et al., 1997; McCormack & West, 2006; Wasburn, 2007; Eriksson, 2013; Johns and McNamara, 2014). Similarly, the Christian mentoring schemes researched were mainly set in faith-based academic institutions and seminaries (Cunningham, 1999; Lund, 2007; Selzer, 2008; Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Campolongo, 2009; Mullen, 2012). This revealed a gap in research into mentoring in other settings such as faith-based and non-profit organisations.

The literature also showed that where mentoring schemes were targeted towards women, they mainly focused on working women with a primary focus on career advancement (McCormack & West, 2006; Wasburn, 2007; Johns and McNamara, 2014). This revealed another gap in research into how such mentoring schemes could support women in different contexts with other goals, such as those relating to personal and spiritual development.

The issues raised above suggest that in order to get an increasingly better understanding of what makes mentoring effective, there is a need for more research into different mentoring models that take on diversity issues such as gender, ethnicity and faith in different contexts. By focusing on a mentoring programme within the context of a church which was not primarily geared towards career advancement, this study aimed to contribute towards filling the gaps revealed above and getting a better understanding in these areas.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative case study approach was chosen for the research and used from a constructivist perspective. Constructivism involves seeking an understanding of the subjective meaning of the world of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Before settling on the case study approach, I considered studying the issue of role conflict in African Christian mothers using a phenomenological approach. However, as an EMS alumni and mentor, I was also interested in using an action research approach to explore other alumni's experiences of mentoring through the scheme. As I considered this, it became increasingly clear that neither approach would be a good fit for the research I wanted to do.

In case study research, a general issue is investigated in detail by focusing on one or more instances of the phenomenon within a bounded case (Denscombe, 2003; Hartley, 2004; Creswell, 2007); the researcher can focus on a typical instance of the issue being investigated "with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences and processes" (Denscombe, 2003 p.32). Adopting a case study approach enabled me to bring together my two areas of interest by allowing me to investigate the phenomenon of challenges facing Christian women of African ancestry by exploring

their experiences of mentoring through EMS and how it influenced them in dealing with those challenges.

The existing literature and my own experiences with clients pointed to role conflict as a challenge faced by Christian and immigrant or expatriate mothers. However, my own experiences were mostly anecdotal and the literature showed no evidence that this was a big enough challenge for Christian African mothers in the UK to justify concentrating my study on it. Therefore, in putting together my research design, I had to first determine whether to concentrate my research on the narrow issue of role conflict or the broader issue of general challenges faced by these women in the UK.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The case study approach encourages the use of multiple data sources to aid triangulation and contribute to the validity of the study (Denscombe, 2003; Yin, 2003; Bryman & Bell, 2007). By adopting this approach, I was able to conduct my research in two phases. In the preliminary phase (phase 1), I used a short online survey to get a broad view of the challenges facing EMS alumni. The results from this phase then determined what I would concentrate on in the main phase (phase 2) which involved more in-depth data collection methods such as semi-structured telephone interviews and analysis of documents relating to the scheme.

*Phase 1 (Preliminary Phase)*

In phase 1 of my research, I chose to collect data through a simple online survey because the information I needed was straightforward, brief and uncontroversial (Denscombe, 2003). The survey consisted of four closed multiple choice questions aimed at gathering demographic information namely: their ethnic background, age group, marital status and whether or not they have children. There was then a fifth question asking participants to indicate three major challenges they faced; an example list was provided based on issues identified from the literature review and my own practice but participants were provided with an ‘other’ box to encourage them to make up their own lists. The survey link was sent to the entire pool of 285 mentees and there were 43 responses. Although this was only a 15.1% response rate, it still provided a broad idea of the challenges faced by the women.

	Valid %
Juggling multiple roles (marriage, motherhood, career, ministry etc.)	61.5
Advancing my career/ministry	61.5
Bringing up children with Christian values	53.8
Sharing my faith	38.5
Living out my faith amid secular influences	23.1
Other	23.1
Balancing cultures (maintaining my cultural identity vs. integrating into western culture)	7.7
Finding mentors/role models	7.7
Conflict between work and family life	7.7
<b>Total Respondents = 13</b>	
<b>Missing Cases = 2</b>	

**Table 1: Challenges facing EMS mothers**

Due to the nominal nature of the data collected and to keep the analysis process simple, I opted for univariate analysis (De Vaus, 2002) to determine the percentages of the demographic information and the challenges highlighted by the mothers; I treated those who answered ‘Yes’ to having children as a sub-sample and analysed it separately. The results of the analysis showed that there were 38 respondents to the question about challenges and of those, 13 were mothers. The results, as presented in Table 1, showed that managing multiple roles, career advancement and bringing up children with

Christian values scored high as challenging areas for these mothers. Based on this observation, I made the decision to focus the main phase of the research on challenges in general rather than narrow it down to role conflict.

**Phase 2 (Main Phase)**

For this phase of the study, I adopted a “purposeful sampling strategy” (Creswell, 2007 p.125) which involves the intentional selection of research participants or sites that will help provide an understanding of the issue at the heart of the study. Marshall and Rossman (1989) provide an example of sampling that includes events, settings, actors and artefacts. My sample included actors who provided a view of the programme from different perspectives and included four mentees, two mentors and the head of the programme; and artefacts i.e. documents such as mentor and mentee handbooks and other forms used as part of the programme. Table 2 below shows the details and characteristics of the interview and document sample.

<b>Mentees</b>	<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Children (Ages)</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Year of EMS Attendance</b>
A1	Black African	Married	2 (4 & 1)	30-40	2010
A2	Black African	Widow	4 (24, 17, 15 & 15)	40-50	2010
A3	Mixed African/British	Married	4 (14, 11, 7 & 4)	40-50	2014
A4	Black African	Married	4 (16, 14, 11 & 6)	40-50	2014
<b>Mentors</b>					
M1	Black African	Married			
M2	Black African	Married			
<b>Head of Scheme</b>					
H1	Black African	Married			
<b>Documents</b>					
D1	Mentee Handbook				
D2	Mentor Handbook				

**Table 2: Details of the sample**

Data from the sample were collected through semi-structured phone interviews. I took guidance from the results of phase 1 of the research in developing the interview questions and these centred on the following broad topics:

- 1) Challenges facing them as Christian mothers from an African background living in the UK.
- 2) Their understanding of the role of a mentor.
- 3) Their experience as a mentee/mentor/head in EMS.
- 4) If/how EMS has influenced them in dealing with their challenges.

I also examined documents relating to the mentoring scheme, mainly to support the other sources of data and help with triangulation.

Thematic analysis was applied to the data generated from the interviews and documents. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six phases of thematic analysis which were adopted in this phase. The data was prepared and stored as Microsoft Word files; I used a transcription service and edited the transcripts whilst listening to the audio files. I then went through an iterative process with each transcript and document data read and compared several times and emergent themes and sub-themes identified and coded. The data from mentee, mentor and programme head interviews and data from the documents were coded and themed separately; they were then compared and triangulated to generate major themes and sub-themes which are shown in Table 3.

The findings to be presented are shown in Table 3 and focus on challenges facing mentees and the influence of mentoring. To give context to the discussion on the influence of mentoring, a brief account of the findings on their experience of group and paired mentoring is also given.

Major Themes	Sub-themes
Challenges Facing Mentees	a. Value conflict
	b. Role conflict
Experience of Mentoring	a. Experience of group mentoring
	b. Experience of paired mentoring
	c. The organisation's perspective
Influence of Mentoring	a. Direct influence of mentoring
	a. Indirect influence of mentoring

**Table 3: Themes and Sub-themes**

## Findings

### Challenges facing mentees

The results from the Phase 2 data analysis were in line with the survey results and also showed that the challenges highlighted by the mothers in our study were mostly expressed in terms of how it affected their children. As one of the mentors put it:

*M1: If I think back on the group scheme, you know, for those that were married with children, that had challenges, it was centred around the children.*

The interview data showed that the challenges highlighted by the participants fell under two main sub-themes: those that related to value conflict and those that related to role conflict.

#### Challenges relating to value conflict

The data analysis showed that some of the challenges that the mothers in our study faced were related to a conflict between the values originating from their African culture and Christian faith and what is prevalent in British society today. One mentor expressed this struggle and its impact on the mother:

*M2: fighting against the system, and fighting against the culture, for me yeah, I think it's a big challenge which sometimes makes you second guess yourself, and ask whether you're doing the right thing.*

There were two major areas where this conflict was most evident in the upbringing of children: (a) conflict between Christian values and mainstream popular culture and (b) differing ideas between African and western culture on how to discipline children. This is expressed by both mentees and mentors and there is evidence here of an overlap of values relating to faith and culture. Table 4 gives examples of these challenges.

Challenge	Examples of the challenge
Christian values vs. mainstream popular culture	<i>M2: I find the environment, or the culture very liberal, and just trying to bring your children up in a certain way... for Christians, you're a bit more conservative in your approach, and there're certain things that you feel that your children need to be picking.</i> <i>A1: I don't like Halloween night... but the child minder she does it. She's white. Lovely lady, but obviously her values are slightly different.</i>
African vs. western culture on discipline	<i>A1: The British mentality is an extreme. The African mentality is an extreme. Talking to a child all the time and not actually disciplining the child is a problem. Disciplining a child excessively and not talking to the child it's a problem. I struggle to find a middle ground daily.</i> <i>M2: African background... we believe very much in high level discipline... that could pose a challenge... if I use the basic thing, even wanting to smack your child... it could be deemed as child abuse because of the kind of environment that you're in.</i>

**Table 4: Challenges relating to value conflict**



In addition to the above, a difference in cultural perceptions is alluded to in the area of aspiration and the way success for a mother is viewed in African culture. For them, their sense of being successful was closely linked to their children's good behaviour and success; for example:

*M1: I think as African mothers, I think we have a default of "our children first." I think that we see our own aspirations and success through their success.*

Looking at all of the above, we can infer that what is considered as good or successful in one culture may be considered a failure in another and for immigrants or expatriates trying to adapt to their host culture, balancing this could be a huge challenge.

#### *Challenges relating to role conflict*

All the mentees interviewed in this study were engaged in multiple roles (as shown in Table 5) and all of them expressed some sort of conflict or struggle in managing the different things that they did. This conflict was reflected in three ways: (a) A struggle with time, (b) The challenge of managing multiple roles and (c) The issue of career development and work-family balance. Table 6 shows examples of how these challenges were expressed from the point of view of the mentees' practical experiences and also the mentors' observations of the challenges they had encountered with mentees that they had worked with.

<b>Mentee</b>	<b>Roles</b>
A1	Full time career, Wife, best friend, mother, sister, housemaid, cook, confident, agony aunt, hero and a teacher.
A2	Self-employed, runs own business, Single mother, in training
A3	Part-time career, wife, mother, trustee, school governor, volunteers with several charities, volunteers in church
A4	Runs own business, wife, mother, daughter, elder sister, volunteers in church

**Table 5: Mentees and their role**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Mentee experiences</b>	<b>Mentor observations</b>
Struggle with time	<i>A1: Essentially I only spend about 3 hours a day with her... I knew that I didn't know her very well until I went on maternity.</i>	
Managing multiple roles	<i>A4: All those roles, you have to try and accommodate your extended family, as well as your own family... have the time to juggle for the children... do stuff for your husband.</i>	<i>M2: This lady... who is a single mum as well. She was trying to juggle everything: motherhood, a career...</i>
Career development and Work/ Family balance	<i>A2: Then I work from home and I find that in between I am having to make dinner or go do the shopping or pay bills.</i>	<i>M1: People's career... maybe having sacrificed being a mum, or sacrificed career, and taking the next path and lost.</i>

**Table 6: Challenges relating to role conflict**

One interesting issue that was highlighted by the data analysis was the reason behind the mothers' involvement in these varied roles. The data suggested that some of these mothers may have been influenced by the emphasis in African culture on aspiration and status for example:

*H1: A lot of them come from African background where your worth and value is determined by your status in life so you get married. You have a PhD or you have a car.*

This suggests that the women may aspire towards marriage and family because of the value that is placed on marital status in African culture and at the same time feel driven towards educational, career and/or business success. Other reasons highlighted for the choice of roles included finances and their feelings about whether a mother should or should not work.

**Experience of group mentoring**

The data analysis showed that the mentor and mentee experience of the group stage of EMS was good with both groups citing gains in learning and information, inspiration and relationships. However, where the mentors gave an all-positive report, some of the mentees highlighted issues in some areas including: relevance of discussions during sessions due to the predominantly young and unmarried demographic of the groups and issues with accessibility i.e. difficulty in being able to attend weekly face-to-face sessions due to family commitments.

**Experience of Paired mentoring**

The data analysis indicated that paired mentoring was not as successful in this case as group mentoring. Only one of the four mentees interviewed went through the paired mentoring phase of the scheme and she reported that she did not find it very helpful. The indication from the data was that this was due to issues relating to rapport and openness between her and the mentor. The mentors reported some positive outcomes with their mentees; highlighting the satisfaction they felt when they saw a tangible impact of the process on their mentees. On the other hand, where mentoring failed, it was mostly due a lack of rapport and incompatible personalities.

**Influence of mentoring**

Having explored the challenges facing the women in our sample, and having taken a brief look at their experience of mentoring, the data presented below focuses on the influence that the experience of group mentoring had on them. The data analysis showed that this influence took two forms: (A) A direct influence which was mostly related to challenges with practical skills and (B) An indirect influence on mind-sets.

*Direct influence of group mentoring*

The data analysis showed some instances where mentees’ challenges were directly influenced by their experience of group mentoring. These were mostly practical in nature because they showed the mentees taking action as a direct result of being a part of the mentoring scheme. Interestingly, the majority of the issues that were directly influenced could be linked to the role conflict challenges discussed earlier. Table 7 presents the direct influence issues and their connection to role conflict.

Direct Influence	Role Conflict Challenge	Quote
Time Management	Struggle with time	<i>A4: I did learn quite a bit about planning a bit of your time in the mentoring scheme.</i>
Multi-tasking	Managing multiple roles	<i>A1: So the advice was, when you are breastfeeding, pray, meditate on the word. When you are hoovering, use that time as you are hoovering, you are thinking about God, you are talking to God, you are worshiping God.</i>
Assertiveness Starting a business	Career development/ work-life balance	<i>A4: I think with the mentoring scheme, I was able to now assert myself in a way to let my clients know that this is my work; this is my skill; this is my price. M2: Going to EMS made them realize their worth, their value... You found people leaving the session determined to go and start a business...</i>

**Table 1: Direct influence of mentoring and links to role conflict**

Apart from the above, there was only one instance where a direct influence was reported by a mentor, which was not necessarily related to the role conflict challenges listed previously:



*M2: At the time we started the relationship, she was neck deep in debt... it's not like she's completely out of it, but, she's more disciplined, she's created a pattern for herself... you see people make practical life changing decisions as a result of that mentoring process.*

#### *Indirect influence of group mentoring*

The data analysis showed that the greater influence that the experience of group mentoring had on the mentees was indirect in that it was not directly associated with the challenges previously listed by the mentees. Whereas a direct influence of mentoring on mostly practical issues was reported by only a section of the women interviewed, all the women studied reported an indirect influence which related to their mind-set. Some of the mentors reported that a change in the women's attitude was immediately evident after the eight week group mentoring period, for example:

*M1: I found it really fulfilling... and really enriching being a part of people's journeys because I saw a lot of transformation from Week one to Week eight.*

All of the women reported experiencing a long-term influence on their lives as a result of their group mentoring experience. The suggestion was that, by influencing the way they viewed themselves and their world, the mentoring they experienced indirectly influenced their decision making and the way they would deal with challenges in every area of their lives even years after passing through the scheme; for example:

*A2: The biggest thing that I got out of it was who I was, who I am and who God has called me to be... How this could be applied to other areas of my life.*

*A3: It has influenced me in making me a better person... It's an overall package thing. Once I realize my value, realise my potential... it obviously helps me in everything.*

One example of the indirect/long-term influence was given by one of the mentees who was not a mother when she went through EMS. She was able to reflect on how she could apply some of the key messages to her role as a mother:

*A1: Knowing your self-worth, I think it can be transferred into building my daughter's confidence in herself as a little girl. I think it's finding ways in which to simplify it for her.*

The data from the mentors also reflected that of the mentees, again pointing out that the influence on the mind-set of the women could be transferred to any area of their lives, for example:

*M1: It's really about themselves, and themselves discovering who they are, as an individual, regardless of whether they are women with children, a career woman, an African woman, so it's really regardless of what you bring with you, it's about how you can move ahead.*

In summary, the data analysis showed that expatriate and immigrant mothers of faith can experience challenges that relate to value conflict and role conflict; their perception of these challenges could be strongly influenced by their culture and faith. The analysis also showed that group mentoring had a direct/immediate influence on the mentees challenges that impacted mostly on practical issues and also an indirect/long-term influence on mind-sets that impacted challenges in every area of life. These findings are discussed in greater detail below.

#### **Discussion and conclusion**

To paraphrase Schwartz and Bilsky (1987), our values are what we believe to be right and good and they help determine our choices, our priorities and our assessment of what is proper. The findings of this study show the importance of faith and cultural values of expatriate and immigrant mothers as a lens through which they view their challenges in contrast to that of the host culture around them. This is in keeping with some findings in previously reviewed literature relating to motherhood in the light of faith and culture (Phanco, 2004; Oates et al., 2008; Page, 2011; Gallagher et al., 2013; O'Neill et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2013; Adya, 2008; Moon, 2012). For the participants of this study, these challenges

were experienced as value conflicts particularly in the area of child rearing as it related to faith and decisions about discipline.

Based on Baumrind's (1966) models of parental control, African parents tend toward the authoritarian/authoritative model whilst the permissive model appears to be widely accepted as the norm in modern western society. In light of this, some decisions which would have otherwise have been considered routine; such as how to discipline a child, become challenging because of the context in which they are interpreted. Previous studies reflect this conflict (Renzaho & Vignjevic, 2011; Renzaho et al., 2011; Degni et al., 2006), but sometimes, what was considered detrimental in one culture was seen to have positive results in another (Baumrind, 1972; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Sorkhabi, 2005; Ali & Frederickson, 2010). For immigrant and expatriate mothers, trying to balance these conflicts could lead to feelings of self-doubt and a lack of confidence; these are psychosocial challenges that could be supported by mentoring (Dansky, 1996; Allen et al., 1997; Cunningham, 1999; Ritchie & Genoni, 2002; Wasburn and Crispo, 2006; Wasburn, 2007; Selzer, 2008).

#### *Transitioning from role conflict to work-family enrichment*

Role conflict occurs when there is difficulty in meeting the demands of two or more roles simultaneously (Khan et al., 1964; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Williams et al., 1991; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Weer et al., 2010). The findings of this study show that mothers can face challenges relating to role conflict as they manage their different roles and make decisions about career and family and these can also be influenced by cultural and religious norms. Similar issues have been highlighted in previously reviewed literature (Clark, 2000; Sellers et al., 2005; Oates et al., 2008; Moon, 2012; Olson et al., 2013; Gallagher et al., 2013). Role conflict suggests a negative interaction between roles especially as it relates to balancing work and family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), however, mentoring could be a means to support a transition to a mind-set of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) where there is a more positive view of roles complimenting and enriching each other.

Mentoring/coaching relationships usually begin with mentees/coachees that have goals or challenges (Rogers, 2013) such as those described above. Their verdict on the success of the mentoring experience will therefore, likely depend on the extent to which it positively influenced them in dealing with such challenges.

#### *Influence of group mentoring on challenges*

This study showed that in this case, group mentoring was more influential than paired mentoring in helping mentees in dealing with their challenges. This confirms the findings in previously reviewed literature which suggest that group mentoring can provide similar benefits to one-to-one mentoring whilst avoiding some of its limitations (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Allen et al., 1997; Wasburn and Crispo, 2006). In light of Hofstede's (1983) description of national cultural dimensions, I would also suggest that the collectivist nature of African culture may have made group mentoring a preferred form of mentoring in this context than paired mentoring. This is an area that would benefit from further research, however, the understanding gained from this current study, apart from informing such research, could also provide useful insight for mentors and organisations working with a diverse client base or work force especially when these originate from similarly collectivist cultures.

#### *Practical challenges and a growth mind-set*

Finally, the findings of this study show that whilst not being the central focus of this mentoring scheme, mentees still received support from the group sessions which they could apply to challenges of a practical nature. In addition to this, the scheme's focus on the mentees' worth and value seems to have helped them develop a growth mind-set (Dweck, 2006; Dweck, 2012); a belief that they can grow, improve and rise up to new challenges. One could infer from this that alongside the direct influence that mentoring in this case had on challenges relating to their roles, there could also potentially be a significant ongoing indirect influence on challenges relating to their values. This suggests that mentoring that focuses on developing a positive sense of self or the shifting of mind-sets could

influence individuals regardless of gender, faith or ethnicity in dealing with their challenges of whatever nature.

### ***Implications, limitations and recommendations***

The findings of this research have implications for the field of coaching and mentoring in several ways: first, these findings contribute to the pool of knowledge in the area of diversity mentoring and could be particularly relevant to mentors working in areas such as parenting, education, health and social care. Second, the findings on mentoring for a positive mind-set is an area which organisations could explore and which could potentially yield the double benefits of creating a happier, more enthusiastic workforce whilst ensuring improved skills and performance. Finally, due to the context and setting of this study, it could inform mentoring in other faith-based and non-profit organisations where career development may not be the primary focus of its volunteers.

The study also has some limitations. Firstly, as a qualitative case study of a relatively small sample set in a particular context there will be questions about its external validity or generalisability. I acknowledge that it may not be replicated in exact form in a similar case; however it can inform research into similar areas of mentoring. Secondly, there is the issue of subjectivity which is associated with qualitative research. Whilst I would point out that steps such as keeping a reflective diary and using multiple data sources were taken to aid subjectivity, I acknowledge that my own view cannot be totally eliminated and does have some influence on the study.

This research has highlighted some areas for possible future research. Firstly, further research into other settings of faith and culture could make useful contributions to the field of diversity mentoring. Secondly, further research into group mentoring and mentoring that focuses on spiritual and personal development, rather than professional development will further determine their efficacy in generating positive outcomes for mentees and organisations.

By focusing on a small sample of Christian mothers of African ancestry in the UK, this study has highlighted some challenges that could face immigrant and expatriate mothers as they try to integrate into a host culture and the role that mentoring could play in supporting and influencing them. As movements across country borders increase and communities and organisations become more diverse, I would suggest that this is an area of coaching and mentoring that could be increasingly important to ensure more cohesive societies.

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