

December 2018

Higher Education Experiences of International Faculty in the U.S. Deep South

Elizabeth Omiteru

Georgia Military College, eomiteru@gmc.edu

James Martinez

Valdosta State University, jammartinez@valdosta.edu

Rudo Tsemunhu

Valdosta State University, rtsemunhu@valdosta.edu

Eugene F. Asola

Valdosta State University, efasola@valdosta.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jma>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), [Law Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

Recommended Citation

Omiteru, Elizabeth; Martinez, James; Tsemunhu, Rudo; and Asola, Eugene F. (2018) "Higher Education Experiences of International Faculty in the U.S. Deep South," *Journal of Multicultural Affairs*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jma/vol3/iss2/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Multicultural Affairs by an authorized editor of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.

Higher Education Experiences of International Faculty in the U.S. Deep South

Elizabeth Omiteru, Georgia Military College
James Martinez, Valdosta State University
Rudo Tsemunhu, Valdosta State University
Eugene F. Asola, Valdosta State University

Issues such as immigration, visas, and allowing foreign workers to live and work in the United States continue to be an ongoing debate (Collins, 2008; NumbersUSA, 2012; Pritzker, 2014). In recent years, colleges, universities, and institutions of higher learning in the United States have seen an increase in the number of International Faculty. Having foreign nationals teach within universities has its advantages and disadvantages. Concerns about the teaching standards, policies, social factors, and the need to adjust to a new culture and environment not only present a huge challenge for International Faculty, but also for the students whom they teach.

In this article, the authors acknowledge the diversity of the study participants (university teaching professors and instructors) who have different individual identity labels, and therefore use “International Faculty” (IF) as an all-encompassing term that envelops the packed unity of their foreign-born but U.S. educated experiences, and ensures thoroughness and accountability for individual scholars’ identity (Kim & Kubota, 2012, Obiakor & Martinez, 2016; Yao Tsikata, 2017) and integrates sociocultural associations with place of birth. Herein, IF describes the broad range of professional university teaching scholars who were born in a different country, received their K-12 education abroad and their higher education degrees in the United States, and are of non-native English speaker status, but does not refer to those IF from Anglophone countries, including Great Britain, Australia, and

Canada who presumably experience some cultural conflicts but not the linguistic issues that non-native speakers of English encounter (Kim & Kubota, 2012; Obiakor & Martinez, 2016; Yao Tsikata, 2017).

Foreign born faculty constitute more than half (53.8%) of those in the *minoritized* category (non-white, non-dominant culture) yet they face challenges on U.S. campuses that include difficult relations with students, feelings of loneliness and, cultural difficulties associated with the process of resettling in a foreign land (Alberts, 2008, Collins, 2008, Theobald, 2008). Considering the low numbers of native Black and Hispanic/Latin@ faculty (Martinez, 2016), it appears to be the case that American four-year institutions depend upon imported talent to diversify their campuses. Unfortunately, then, IF may benefit from the lack of native Black and Latin@ faculty plight, and still, are essential in providing diversifying perspectives to curriculum. Naming the contradiction beyond their control, IF’s need to be supported and retained is imperative. However, prejudice and discrimination from students and colleagues continue to influence promotion and tenure approval stamps for IF (Alberts, 2008, Collins, 2008, Theobald, 2008; Yao Tsikata, 2017).

Prior studies about IF’s role in learning have been assessed from the instructors and students’ perspectives (Alberts, 2008; Kavas & Kavas, 2008), and more recently in the U.S. Southeast (Kang & Rubin, 2009, Kim, 2014, Williams & Case, 2015). Student concerns of the instructors’ accents and style of teaching have been widely documented by many researchers (e.g., English-speaking ability, trouble understanding lecturers, poor written language skills, poor teaching presentation/performance (Gravois, 2005; Kavas & Kavas, 2008; Nimoh, 2010). Kavas and Kavas (2008) and Alberts (2008) both carried out similar research and made

various recommendations based on their findings to assist IF. Suggestions were made on how to improve teaching techniques and how to adapt to the American classroom culture (e.g., pass a test of spoken English, "Speak Tests," projected outline of each lecture, screen test instructors with poor language skills, and oral / performance competence).

Kavas and Kavas (2008) explored the effects of an instructor's accent, culture, and teaching styles on students, but few studies have examined issues from both the students' and the instructors' perspectives (Alberts, 2008). According to Kim, Wolf-Wendel and Twombly (2011), "scholarly attention to IF has been limited and little is known about who they are, where they work, and how they experience U.S. higher education institutions" (p. 721).

For this study, the researchers focused on IF's perceptions and examined both their positive and negative experiences to help explain why the rural Southeast might be a uniquely challenging environment for IF. The U.S. Southeast's history of institutionalized segregation and racism was an obvious noted concern by IF, and the Deep South's extremely high poverty and low education rates was also duly noted. In regards to the Southern hospitality contradictions, the fact that most Southerners are more politically and socially conservative than other parts of the country, Georgia's recent anti-immigrant laws have made international news for its repressive nature, and the recent influx of immigrants to the Southeast, justifies the importance of the IF's unique context for the study. The purpose of this study was to determine the obstacles and opportunities for foreign born college faculty to contribute to the internationalization and globalization of the higher education in U.S., in Southeastern colleges. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of International Faculty working in US rural Southeast colleges?
2. How do International Faculty perceptions and experiences influence their relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators in US rural Southeast colleges?

The researchers provide empirical data to assist stakeholders including higher education administrators, faculty, staff, students, and diversity and inclusion policies in identifying strategies that make International Faculty (IF) experiences more desirable. Utilization of this study may help improve negative experiences, reinforce positive experiences, and what universities in the rural Southeast can do to help IF transition into their new environment; this study also brings attention to the increased diversity in the U.S. Southeast to determine the professional contributions of foreign born faculty in the Deep South.

Regional differences in the U.S. and the rural Southeast for International Faculty

The review of the literature investigated the International Faculty's individual experiences as teachers and scholars at U.S. universities, but also their relationships within the organizations in which they worked, particularly their perceptions about administrators, respective communities, colleagues and co-workers, and about students.

International Faculty Perceptions

Stereotypes can influence the work of International Faculty (IF). For example, students may rate the quality of instruction differently based on their stereotypes towards IF. Steele (2013) found that if a

person's identity has a negative stereotype attached to it and that person engages in important activities that are relevant to that stereotype may become distracted and anxious and then underperform in a manner consistent with the stereotype. Bazemore, Janda, Derlega, and Paulson (2010) focused on the IF as possible targets of rejection and stereotypes, a stigma consciousness associated with being foreign born, and how these concerns may affect their university experiences. The study supported stigma consciousness (Pinel, 1999), a perceived rejection that being International anticipated loneliness and negative feelings toward the university. The researchers showed an unexpected pathway between stigma consciousness and perceptions of teaching effectiveness. Stigma consciousness was significant to the perception of rejection, while rejection was significant to self-perceived teaching effectiveness. The results document the importance of stigma consciousness about being foreign born on the psychological adjustment and work-related perceptions of university faculty (Bazemore et al., 2010; Pinel, Warner, & Chua, 2005).

Similarly, Collins' (2008) "Coming to America" survey research of both IF and their students explored issues and obstacles that these faculty experience at U.S. institutions. The IF identified substantial concerns about cultural differences, including relations with students, feelings of loneliness and the difficult process of obtaining permanent residency rights (Collins, 2008). In response, the author provides strategies that may assist with the transition into U.S. academe for IF, which include (a) improving mentoring, (b) networking and training opportunities for IF, and (c) providing more information and training for department chairs to support International colleagues.

Even though international scholars make up a significant portion of the U.S. geography profession, little is known about their in U.S. colleges and universities career experiences (Foote, Wei, Monk, and Theobald, 2008). The international geographers confronted cultural problems and legal issues within the U.S. institutions and provided insight to possible policy and institutional changes that might support them (Foote, Wei, Monk, & Theobald, 2008). Among the challenges of implementations of such cultural and legal strategies in the classroom, the scholars emphasized the need to offer international perspectives on geographic issues to students but also to their colleagues. While the researchers address the situation in the United States, the need to consider the experiences of international academics in other nations experiencing similar growth in intellectual immigration was noted as essential (Foote et al., 2008).

Many female IF experience systematic oppression and are constantly marginalized. Nkabinde (2010), in her personal narrative, explained the triple marginality she experienced as a female IF. She decried the lack of respect for females, who "...must continuously prove their intellectual worth..." (p. 44) or face the consequences of being stereotyped. Her narrative overwhelmingly explains the pressure non dominant women encounter as they continue to strive for excellence and equity in higher education. Researchers showed that in addition to disparities in wages, there is a gender inequality in roles and opportunities provided to female and *minoritized* persons in higher education (Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2009, Nkabinde, 2010). Issues such as inequality, unfair treatment and racial biases are not limited to international females; researchers have shown that international males are significantly affected as well (Obi, 2010, Obiakor, 2010).

Low job satisfaction, lack of support and cultural differences are some areas where many IF continue to experience problems (Gahungu, 2011; Lee & Janda, 2006; Lin et al., 2008). In contrast, researchers showed that IF, due to their skills and global awareness, have a positive influence on the students' population, the community and their colleagues as a whole and more may be needed in pure and applied sciences, and most especially in social science programs where IF are underrepresented (Gahungu, 2011; Lee & Janda, 2006; Lin et al., 2008).

As the United States continues to benefit from imported talents in higher education, it has become important to create a multicultural environment that would address IF insecurities in order for them to be fully integrated into the system (Lee & Janda, 2006; Lin et al., 2008; Marvasti, 2005). Researchers (Lee & Janda, 2006; Lin et al., 2008; Marvasti, 2005) continue to make recommendations on strategies that may be implemented to create and maintain an unbiased environment where IF feel welcome and accepted not only by students, but by administrators and fellow scholars.

However, it is also important for international instructors to acknowledge the differences in culture and find a way to function in their new environment (Gahungu, 2011). IF need to adjust their teaching styles from the teacher-centered style they are familiar with to a "...pluralistic model of learning where abundance of resources allows for greater credibility cross-checking" (Gahungu, 2011, p. 19).

International faculty in the rural Southeast

IF deal with a different culture when they join U.S. universities. This forces them to adapt to various life domains in order to successfully bridge the cultural divide.

Embracing other cultures can be a difficult process, and IF who teach in South Georgia institutions cannot avoid facing cultures different from the ones to which they are most accustomed. IF often experience cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity, especially in their struggles to play by the rules as immigrants (Gahungu, 2011; Grant & Obi, 2010; Lee & Janda, 2006; Obiakor,). Already defined for this study, not all immigrants are IF or people of diverse backgrounds, and of course, not all non-dominant faculty are international. Three of the authors of this study attended high school, universities, and lived in a native country for a number of years before coming to the United States to obtain a doctoral degree. These experiences piqued an interest in the experiences of others. Recognizing that some choose to stay and work in the United States after completing their degrees, the researchers explored what many said it took to adjust to the American teaching style, the culture, the environment, and the ease or difficulty with which this process occurred (Bazemore et al., Collins, 2008; Foote et al., 2008).

Lee and Janda (2006) examined racial conflicts between students and non-dominant professors. They identified several cases of student racial bias towards non-dominant professors. Lee and Janda reported the existence of negative course evaluations based on the fact that the professor was not an American born English speaker and speaks with an accent during lectures. The study also revealed that foreign and non-dominant professors teaching in academic fields dominated by predominantly White professors and students were not well accepted by some students. Lee and Janda offered practical suggestions to minimize racial biases non-dominant professors may face in colleges and universities.

Lin, Pearce, and Wang (2009) used the 2004 National Study of Post-Secondary Faculty (NSOPF04) to reexamine the roles of IF in four-year American colleges after September 11, 2001. They found that the percentage of IF (22.1%) was significantly higher than the percentage of International population (11.7%) in America. The researchers concluded that American higher education at four-year colleges and institutions still needs the talents of IF since higher education is one of America's core foundations of economic strengths.

IF members lack personal satisfaction from their work, thereby inhibiting them excelling in their teaching roles. However, Mamiseishvili (2011) determined that although IF members seem less satisfied with their authority to make decisions on curriculum, course content, and methods of instruction, their satisfaction support is comparable to the satisfaction level reported by their U.S.-born counterparts. Mamiseishvili joined Lin, Pearce, and Wang's (2009) call for support for IF teaching at four-year colleges and universities. The authors argue that institutions may perform better if they support IF.

Only a few universities have training or mentoring programs specifically aimed at assisting IF (Gravois, 2005; Moody, 2004). As a result, most IF are unprepared for what is expected of them in establishing relationships, meeting culturally assumed norms, and navigating their new environment (Bazemore et al., 2010; Collins, 2008; Foote et al., 2008). Kavas and Kavas's (2008) shed some valuable insights about faculty experiences in their study of students' perceptions and attitudes toward foreign-accented faculty. IF reported instances of criticism from their students, some of whom have attributed their low grades to the inefficiencies of their IF. This is a real challenge for all faculty,

irrespective of nationality, culture, or race, because efficiencies are often measured by the success rates of students (Kavas & Kavas, 2008; Lee & Janda, 2006).

Prior studies (Bazemore et al., 2010; Collins, 2008; Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Foote et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2011) on IF relationships with their peers indicated that while IF members are more productive than their counterpart in the same profession, they are less satisfied with their jobs than their U.S.-born colleagues. The researchers in this study examined IF experiences in a mixed methods case study.

Methods

Setting and Participants

The study focused particularly on International Faculty (IF) who worked in the southern region of the United States. The snowball sampling technique was used to select participants based on the information they possess, that manifest the phenomenon under study, and to facilitate interviewing (Patton, 2002). The institutions are regional tier 2 colleges, with a student diversity similar to the national average ("USNews Higher Education," n.d.). The online survey was sent out to 72 participants. Twenty-three participants responded to the online survey, and four were eliminated due to lack of sufficient data. Ten participants took part in the face-to-face interviews based on their availability and willingness to be part of this study. The online survey was administered first, followed by the face-to-face interviews, while, face-to-face interviews were conducted at faculty's places of work.

For the online survey, 32% of respondents were Asian/Pacific Islander ($n=6$); 47% were African-American ($n=9$); and 21% of respondents categorized themselves as multiracial ($n=4$), 79% of online

respondents were male while 21% were females (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Composition of Online Face-to-face Participants

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male		
Online	15	79.0
Face-to-face	5	50.0
Female		
Online	4	21.1
Face-to-face	5	50.0
Ethnicity		
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	31.6
	5	50.0
African-American	9	47.4
	5	50.0
Multiracial	4	21.1

The number of years respondents spent teaching in different four-years colleges in Southern region of Georgia ranged from one to twenty years. All faculty in this study had lived a majority of their adult lives in their native countries before coming to the United States, a condition that was absolutely necessary for the study to achieve the goals of providing comparisons between participants' native environment and the southern United States.

Procedure

For this research, IF were recruited using the snowball sampling technique. This method of sampling was useful "for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases" (Patton, 2002, p. 237). Participants were recruited based on recommendations from other participants for face-to-face interviews. The same sampling technique was used to gather names of participants for the online survey.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at faculty's places of work, and pseudonyms were used during the interview process. The same pseudonyms were used in the transcribed data to conceal the identities of faculty interviewed. Duration for the interviews was between 45 and 55 minutes.

Interviews were unstructured and usually began with an overarching request – "Tell me your experiences about working in the South." The same sets of questions were answered by the faculty who participated in online surveys. Participants were IF who studied and received their doctoral degrees in the United States and chose to remain in the US to work instead of returning to their native countries. The Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted permission to conduct this study.

Data Collection

Basic demographic information, faculty involvement, and items concerning Academic evaluations were also assessed. The International Faculty Online Survey (IFOS) and face to face interview questions were constructed based on a thorough review of numerous literature in the areas of IF experiences. The items on the survey and questionnaire were author-generated though adapted from current measures found in previous IF research (Cragile, 2000; Boyd, 2003; Rubin, 2005; Leonard P, & Leonard, L, 2006). The methodology and data utilized in this study were used to answer the research questions and analyses.

International Faculty Online Survey (IFOS). The IFOS was a 5-item Likert-scale online survey that contained four open ended questions, both measuring IF's perception about administrators and respective communities. Administrators' responses ranged from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). The information was analyzed by comparing responses to determine any differences (Creswell, 2015). Means and standard deviations for each variable can be found in Table 1.

Face to Face Interviews (FFI). On the FFI, participants' perceptions about colleagues and co-workers, and about

students were compiled together with data (Yes or No responses) from the IFOS, “Students relate to me differently because of my...”. (see Table 3). Both responses were compared to examine major differences. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. Results were interpreted by identifying and discussing emergent patterns in data (Creswell, 2015).

Field Notes. Narrative field notes were used to make anecdotal notes. Additionally, the field notes were used to list and consider potential limitations of the study. Data from field notes were analyzed by coding and then determining any patterns related to the research questions (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002) described below.

Table 2
Descriptive Data for International Faculty Perceptions

	N Highly Satisfied		Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor Dissatisfied		Highly Dissatisfied	
	n	n	n	n	n	M	SD
Level of job satisfaction	19	6	6	5	1	1	3.8 2.59
Willingness of collegial collaboration	16	3	5	5	1	2	3.2 1.79
Treatment as compared with American colleagues	16	3	7	3	2	1	3.2 2.28

Results

There were four major emerging themes from this study; (1) perceptions about administrators, (2) perceptions about their respective communities, (3) perceptions about their colleagues and co-workers, and, (4) perceptions about students they teach. Prior research (Kim et al., 2011; Obiakor et al., 2010) determined that faculty members’ work experiences were not only influenced by their individual factors, but in their relationships with the organizations in which they work. All the IF interviewed had positive and negative experiences, not only with colleagues, staff, and students, but also with top administrators. From the online survey, 47.4% of IF described their

experiences as positive, 15.8% reported their experiences as negative, and 36.8% claimed they have had both positive and negative experiences since working in the South (see Table 3).

Table 3
Job Perceptions of International Faculty

	N Highly Satisfied		Satisfied		Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Highly Dissatisfied	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Level of job satisfaction	19	6 31.6	6 31.6	5 26.3	1 5.3	1 5.3				
Willingness of collegial collaboration	16	3 18.0	5 31.0	5 31.0	1 6.0	2 12.0				
Treatment as compared with American colleagues	16	3 18.0	7 43.0	3 18.0	2 12.0	1 6.0				

All faculty who participated in face-to-face interviews revealed both positive and negative experiences. This study categorized findings according to faculty’ responses from the online survey and narratives from the interviews.

Perceptions about Administrators

Narratives from interviews and the open-ended questions of the online survey suggested that some faculty felt an obvious hostility from administrators. This view is further supported by personal experiences from international scholars (Nkabinde, 2010, Obi, 2010, Obiakor et al., 2010) who have had similar struggles in the past. Although 31% of the faculty surveyed online reported being satisfied with their jobs, narratives from face-to-face interviews and survey did not support this percentage. Ninety percent of the interviewed faculty lamented about the lack of tolerance from some administrators and colleagues, and how those attitudes had inadvertently affected their work performance and morale. This behavior was reflected in one of the responses provided by an instructor who participated in the online survey. According

to this instructor, “The current administration allows for those in power to abuse their offices for the purpose of frustrating, harassing, and retaliating against certain faculty members—generally those not from the US.” Tracy, one of the faculty who participated in a face-to-face interview, also complained that:

Administration is not very supportive; they do not appreciate anything I do.” A similar feeling of frustration was expressed by Mukuria (2010) in her narratives titled “Lack of equity in America’s teacher education programs: My voice.” The author lamented about the lack of support and open hostility experienced from the program chair while teaching in higher education, which led her to define racism as “. . . an endemic disease in American institutions. (p. 82)

While 5.3% of faculty reported high levels of dissatisfaction with their jobs, 31.6% claimed to be highly satisfied with their jobs. However, faculty claimed they would appreciate programs and activities that could help IF with the transitions to their new environments. Accent reduction programs that may help IF in the classroom and activities that would familiarize IF to South Georgians’ way of life were two of the transition processes mentioned by respondents. Multicultural activities to educate colleagues, co-workers, and students about cultural differences were also important to these IF.

Perceptions About Respective Communities

Over 90% of IF attributed the negativity and the hostile experiences from people they encountered to be the results of Southerners’ lack of global exposure. Other however, attributed the problem of hostility to be

grounded in the public’s lack of exposure to diversity. Nkabinde (2010), an African-American scholar who had a similar experience expressed that “embarrassing stereotypes and negative images of blackness” made the problems of hostility to be even more significant for black foreigners. Fifty-six percent of the IF who took the online survey stated that they were satisfied with the attitudes of people living in their communities, while 43% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. All of the IF believed that their cultural backgrounds and/or accents may have had a negative influence on the attitudes of people within their communities, with colleagues, and also with students. McCalman (2007) stated that cultural dimensions such as individualism or collectivism, time orientation, and other dimensions differ by degrees in different geographic areas of the country, and these dimensions require constant adaptation depending on the state and the region. Asad, during his face-to-face interview, talked about Southern hospitality and the warmth which residents of the South are known to show towards strangers. However, his sarcastic response was “. . . what hospitality? . . . I don’t feel it here.” Anthony, on the other hand, commented that “some South Georgians can be somewhat hospitable once they get to know you.”

The slow-paced lifestyle and environment were some positive aspects of living in the area according to this study. Faculty who worked or attended colleges in other parts of the United States expressed their satisfaction with the small communities in many South Georgia suburbs, and they noted that it was a great place to raise families. Another major advantage of working in the South, many agreed, was the ‘beautiful’ weather.

Respondents also compared and rated their experiences before they moved to South Georgia. Seventy five percent of

online respondents claimed to be satisfied with their jobs before coming to South Georgia, and one of the reasons many moved to the South was job related.

Perceptions about Colleagues and Co-Workers

The researchers found that IF experienced equal levels of positive and negative experiences. Data in this study showed that those who had a positive experience also had an offsetting negative experience. Questions on diversity and equity were sensitive subjects, especially during face-to-face interviews. Unlike IF who were surveyed online, those who participated in face-to-face interviews were very cautious and some did not answer the questions posed to them about their colleagues and administrators, despite the fact that pseudonyms were used during the interviews.

IF expressed different views about their relationships with colleagues. Out of the 16 IF who responded to this particular question on the online survey, 18% of IF were highly satisfied with the relationship with colleagues ($n=3$); 43% were satisfied ($n=7$); 18% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ($n=3$); 12% were dissatisfied ($n=2$); and 6% claimed to be highly dissatisfied ($n=1$). While a high percentage was concerned about the lack of collaboration and respect from colleagues, data showed 18% were highly satisfied with the level of collegiality ($n=3$). Participant narratives shed some light on racial and cultural prejudices, lack of partnership with colleagues, and the disparity in the level of job expectations.

In the treatment of IF when compared to their American counterpart, results showed that 18% of IF believe they have to put in more work than their native-born colleagues. Some of the IF interviewed reported being

discriminated against by superiors, but they never reported the instance(s) to the university committee. International Faculty suggested that having an ‘open door policy’, especially when working directly with colleagues and students, is the only way to have a positive experience teaching in South Georgia. International Faculty also said they related better with older students who have been exposed to other cultures or who have traveled abroad. One online survey participant shared their frustration:

. . . My colleagues do not look at me as equals, but think they (American born) are better than me no matter how hard I try to accomplish needed tasks and even go above and beyond what is expected. I feel alienated.

Even though there has been few reports that show IF triumphs and struggles about embracing the American culture, anecdotal evidence suggest otherwise. International Faculty are devoted to their respective cultures, and the unanimous view shared by all is to make an effort to understand the American culture as well. Njoroge, one of the interviewees reflected on the American culture:

No. what I am saying is, try to understand their culture and then you will be accepted (laugh). I am not saying you should embrace their culture, but try to understand it. Try to make sense of the culture . . . although sometimes their culture doesn’t make sense to me . . . but I try to understand it.

International Faculty’ views about accents were mixed. Nearly half of those interviewed did not perceive their accent as a deterrent to the delivery of instruction; however, the other half felt this was a problem. Some expressed they were treated differently because of their accents. An Ohio State University study on diversity issues showed that students with biases and

stereotypes against cultures often see IF who have accents as unserious scholars (Gilroy, 2007). A similar study conducted by Boyd (2003) supported this claim, that foreign accents have an impact on listeners' attitudes and judgments. Consequently, IF often find themselves having to learn the English language all over again or face the ridicule of having to repeat themselves at meetings, the classroom or when conversing with colleagues (Mutua, 2010).

Perceptions about Students

Students' perceptions about IF have often been mixed (Alberts, 2008, Kavas & Kavas, 2008). Prior studies have addressed students' perceptions on issues such as accents, differing teaching strategies, and cultural differences in classrooms taught by IF (see Table 4). Reports from these studies showed that these factors may greatly influence students' learning.

Just as researchers continually investigate what is best to help students in their learning, it is equally important to assess IF needs. Researchers in this study asked IF to share their perceptions about issues such as diversity, teaching styles, colleagues, and their students. Participants were asked to compare the way of life in the South with other states they have lived in since arriving in the United States and with their respective countries by answering a few questions about their students and the curriculum. With regards to the students they teach, IF found some similarities in students' behavior, both in the United States and their countries. An overwhelming 90% of faculty interviewed reported that the majority of their students are open and friendly. Over 40% of faculty believed their students are lazy and tend to "blame their academic shortcomings on foreign accents."

Table 4

Perceptions about Colleagues and Students

Statement	Response			
	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Based on your overall experience with students, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. Students relate to me differently because of my...				
Culture	8	47.0	9	52.0
Background	4	23.0	13	76.0
Race	7	36.0	12	63.0
Accent	10	55.0	8	44.0
Based on your overall experience with colleagues, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. Colleagues relate to me differently because of my...				
	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Culture	8	47.0	9	52.0
Background	4	23.0	13	76.0
Race	7	36.0	12	63.0
Accent	10	55.0	8	44.0

International Faculty also expressed their concern about the curriculum. They agreed that expectations in the South are generally low, and therefore, curriculum is not as rigorous as it ought to be when compared to their countries and some states within the United States.

Discussion

Participants of this study reported their struggles dealing with issues of prejudice from colleagues and administrators. Some participants considered students to be too laid back with regards to their academic work, and that students did not seem to prioritize the course workload. Still, most faculty viewed students as pleasant and very respectful.

The researchers in this study determined that IF felt pressured in some aspects related to their jobs. Not only did they have to adapt to their new surroundings, mingle with colleagues, and successfully teach students in the classroom, IF also expressed the notion that they work twice as hard as their colleagues. This was reflected in some of the responses from such as this one:

My morale was adversely affected and might have affected my productivity. Generally, the performance of someone from the non dominant group must exceed the

performance of the average faculty member to be accorded the lowest level of academic recognition.

Interview data suggested that many IF do not stay in the South for long; the reasons for this issue are not, however, the focus of this study. For IF to feel welcomed, the community must encourage a diverse environment where foreign cultures, skills, and language are embraced and appreciated. The following recommendations were made by respondents during this study:

- Accent reduction training: Research demonstrated that this can be done using technology applications (Kavas & Kavas, 2008; Schwartz, 1996).
- Have activities and programs for incoming International Faculty that would prepare them for their new surroundings and the people with whom they may come into contact (Bazemore et al., 2010; Collins, 2008).
- Assign a mentor to new International Faculty, so that they know that they are not alone (if they are struggling or not), and that there is support for them from the university. Encourage diversity by having more international programs (Gravois, 2005; Moody, 2004).

Although the accent issue is one of the problems expressed by IF in this study, much has been written about IF and accents. Berardo (2011), Boyd (2003), and Gilroy (2007) advised foreign first-time teachers to know that accent reduction may take some time. Berardo advised IF to learn to adapt their teaching styles to match different environments, especially if they teach in a small or a large classroom. Promoting “critical thinking through a participatory classroom approach” may also be helpful (Berardo, 2011, p. 423).

Issues such as equity, prejudices, and discrimination expressed by IF are sensitive issues that must be addressed individually. There was no single solution that can address these problems. However, school administrators must consider programs that may cultivate cultural tolerance between indigenous and IF. Indigenous faculty should not see these foreigners as threats, but as individuals who can enrich their culture, as Kim, Wolf-Wendel, and Twombly (2011) emphasized, “International scholars bring with them a diversity of perspectives and worldviews that potentially enrich the university in the global context” (p. 722). International Faculty, on the other hand, must respect, learn, and adjust to the culture within their new environment. This outlook may enable them to relate better with people in their communities, address the needs of the students they teach, and also prepare them for other challenges in the classroom.

Limitations and Implications

The sample size was limited to two institutions in South Georgia, and responses were similar across both universities. Although the online survey was anonymous, some IF were unwilling to participate in this study, and those who participated were very careful about talking or revealing too much. Out of the 72 online surveys that were sent, only 19 completed the questions in full; four IF skipped most of the questions on the survey.

Due to the high levels of sensitivities about some of the questions asked during the interviews, a few did not want their answers recorded. Furthermore, IF who participated anonymously online gave responses such as “I don’t want to get into this area” or “I prefer not to explain further.” Findings from this research cannot be generalized to the whole population of IF

teaching in South Georgia or to other universities or colleges in the United States. More research on this topic is needed. Future research should focus on structuring the questions in such a way that will lessen faculty' apprehensions about losing their jobs. This could increase the number of face-to-face and online participants. Some of the faculty who participated in this research have only worked in the South, and therefore were unable to compare their experiences with other areas within the United States.

The implications of the present study are important because of how higher education has had an increase in foreign nationals choosing to remain in the United States after completing their degrees, and how IF may be oblivious to or may not be prepared for how their lives are impacted by the U.S. American culture and Deep South environment, along with politics and racial biases. This mixed method case study contributes to the field and provides a locally generated report to assist stakeholders (higher education administrators, faculty, staff, students, and diversity and inclusion policies) in identifying strategies that may make IF experiences more desirable; emphasizes recommendations on what may be done to improve negative experiences to reinforce positive experiences, and what universities in the rural Southeast can do to help IF transition into their new environment; substantiates the need and attention to the increased diversity in the U.S. Southeast to determine the differences between the professional experiences in the Deep South and those of international Scholars' native countries, or places lived and worked, before residing in the Southeast.

References

- Alberts, H. C. (2008). The challenges and opportunities of International instructors in the classroom. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32(2), 189-203. doi: 10.1080/03098260701731306
- Bazemore, S. D., Janda, L. H., Derlega, V. J., & Paulson, J. F. (2010). The role of rejection in mediating the effects of stigma consciousness among International university professors. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 3(2), 85-96
- Berardo, R. (2011). Speaking with an accent: Some practical advice for foreign first-time teachers. *PS: Political Science And Politics*, 44(2), 421-423. doi:10.1017/S1049096511000278
- Boyd, S. (2003). International teachers in the multilingual classroom in Sweden: The role of attitudes to foreign accent. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 6(3&4) doi: 10.1080/13670050308667786
- Collins, J. M. (2008). Coming to America: Challenges for faculty coming to United States' universities. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32(2), 179-188.
- Corley, E., & Sabharwal, M. (2007). International academic scientists and engineers: Producing more and getting less than their U.S.-born peers? *Research In Higher Education*, 48(8), 909-940. doi:10.1007/s11162-007-9055-6
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Australia: Pearson.
- Foote, K. E., Wei, L, Monk, J., & Theobald, R. (2008). International scholars in US universities: Issues, concerns, and strategies. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32(2), 167-178.

- Gahungu, A. (2011). Integration of international faculty in academia: Foreignness as an asset. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(1). Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ972876.pdf>
- Gilroy, M. (2007). Bias in student evaluations of faculty? *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, 17(19), 26-27.
- Gravois, J. (2005, April 8). Teach impediment: When student can't understand the instructor, who is to blame? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(31), A10-12.
- Kang, O., & Rubin, D. L. (2009). Reverse linguistic stereotyping: Measuring the effect of listener expectations on speech evaluation. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*, 28, 441-456.
- Kavas, A., & Kavas, A. (2008). An exploratory study of undergraduate college students' perceptions and attitudes toward foreign accented faculty. *College Student Journal*, 42(3), 879-890.
- Kim, M. (2014). A comparison of pedagogical practices and beliefs in International and domestic mathematics teaching assistants. *Journal of International Students*, 4(1), 74 – 88.
- Kim, S. & Kubota, R. (Eds.) (2012). Supporting nonnative-English-speaking instructors to maximize student learning in their courses. Special issue of *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 23(3).
- Kim, D., Wolf-Wendel, L., & Twombly, S. (2011). international faculty: Experiences of academic life and productivity in U.S. universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 82(6). doi: 10.1353/jhe.2011.0038
- Lee, G., & Janda, L. (2006). Successful multicultural campus: Free from prejudice toward minority professors. *Multicultural Education*, 14(1), 27–30.
- Lin, Z., Pearce, R., & Wang, W. (2009). Imported talents: Demographic characteristics, achievement and job satisfaction of International full time faculty in four-year American colleges. *Higher Education*, 57, 703–721.
- Mamiseishvili, K. (2011). Teaching workload and satisfaction of International and US- born faculty at four-year post-secondary institutions in the United States. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 4(3), 163–174.
- Martinez, J. (2016). Motivations of a growing Latino scholar in U.S. higher education. In
- Obiakor, F. E., & Martinez, J. (2016). Latin@ voices in multicultural education: From invisibility to visibility in higher education (pp. 1–14). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Marvasti, A. (2005). US academic institutions and perceived effectiveness of international faculty. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39(1), 151–176.
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCalman, C. L. (2007). Being an interculturally competent instructor in the United States: Issues of classroom dynamics and appropriateness, and recommendations for international instructors. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 110, 65-74. doi: 10.1002/tl
- Moody, J. (2004). *Faculty diversity: Problems and solutions*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mukuria, G. (2010). Lack of equity in American higher education: My voice. In Obiakor, F.E., Grant, P., & Obi, S.O. (Eds.), *Voices of International African*

- American teacher educators in the United States* (p. 119 – 128). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Mutua, K. (2010). Pedagogical accent in teacher education: Narrating self within/against pedigrees and stereotypes of race and national origin. In F. E. Obiakor, P. Grant, & S. O. Obi, (Eds.), *Voices of International African American teacher educators in the United States* (p. 17–31). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Nimoh, P. (2010). Communication challenges faced by international faculty. *Creative Nursing*, 16(2), 59–62.
- Nkabinde, Z. P. (2010). Living with triple marginality in America's teacher preparation programs. In F. E. Obiakor, P. Grant, & S.O. Obi, (Eds.), *Voices of International African American teacher educators in the United States* (p. 41–53). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- NumbersUSA. (2012, February 1.). Obama administration announces initiatives to attract more highly-skilled foreign workers. Retrieved from <https://www.numbersusa.com/content/news/february-1-2012/obama-administration-wants-reform-make-it-easier-highly-skilled-immigrants-come>
- Obi, S. O. (2010). America's teacher education: My turbulent journey. In F. E. Obiakor, P. Grant, & S.O. Obi, (Eds.), *Voices of International African American teacher educators in the United States* (p. 119–128). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Obiakor, F. E., Grant, P., & Obi, S.O. (Eds.). (2010). *Voices of International African American teacher educators in the United States*. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Obiakor, F. E., & Martinez, J. (2016). Latin@ voices in multicultural education: From invisibility to visibility in higher education. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pinel, E. (1999). Stigma consciousness: The psychological legacy of social stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 114–128.
- Pinel, E., Warner, L., & Chua, P. (2005). Getting there is only half the battle: Stigma consciousness and maintaining diversity in higher education. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61, 481–508.
- Pritzker, P. (2014). Taking action to attract the world's top talented professionals. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/05/06/taking-action-attract-world-s-top-talented-professionals>
- Schwartz, A. H. (1996). *Technology enhanced accent modification (TEAM) for international teaching assistants (ITAs)*. Cleveland, OH: Department of Speech and Hearing, Cleveland State University. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED414836>
- Williams, G. M., & Case, R. E., (2015). Tale of the Tape: International Teaching Assistant Noticing During Videotaped Classroom Observations. *Journal of International Students*, 5(4), 434 - 446.
- Yao Tsikata, P. (2017). Teaching from selfhood: A personal growth journey with unimaginable dividends. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*. 12.

Appendix A

Table 1

Demographic Composition of Online Face-to-face Participants

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male		
Online	15	79.0
Face-to-face	5	50.0
Female		
Online	4	21.1
Face-to-face	5	50.0
Ethnicity		
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	31.6
	5	50.0
African-American	9	47.4
	5	50.0
Multiracial	4	21.1

Appendix B

Table 2

Descriptive Data for International Faculty Perceptions

	<i>N</i>	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied		
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>
Level of job satisfaction	19	6	6	5	1	1	3.8 2.59
Willingness of collegial collaboration	16	3	5	5	1	2	3.2 1.79
Treatment as compared with American colleagues	16	3	7	3	2	1	3.2 2.28

Appendix C

Table 3*Job Perceptions of International Faculty*

	<i>N</i>	Highly Satisfied		Satisfied		Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Highly Dissatisfied	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Level of job satisfaction	19	6	31.6	6	31.6	5	26.3	1	5.3	1	5.3
Willingness of collegial collaboration	16	3	18.0	5	31.0	5	31.0	1	6.0	2	12.0
Treatment as compared with American colleagues	16	3	18.0	7	43.0	3	18.0	2	12.0	1	6.0

Appendix D

Table 4

Perceptions about Colleagues and Students

Statement	Response			
Based on your overall experience with students, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. Students relate to me differently because of my...				
	Yes		No	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Culture	8	47.0	9	52.0
Background	4	23.0	13	76.0
Race	7	36.0	12	63.0
Accent	10	55.0	8	44.0
Based on your overall experience with colleagues, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. Colleagues relate to me differently because of my...				
	Yes		No	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Culture	8	47.0	9	52.0
Background	4	23.0	13	76.0
Race	7	36.0	12	63.0
Accent	10	55.0	8	44.0