THE STRUGGLE IS REAL: THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

AND THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE OF

BLACK FEMALE STUDENTS

AT CHICO STATE

A Thesis
Presented
To the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master
of
Social Work

by
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Spring 2021
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© Cara Campbell

Spring 2021

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Dedication

My first thesis, but not my last piece of work, is dedicated to all Black women who strive for success as leaders in higher education and advocates of progressive change, not only for themselves, but also for the institutions as a whole in which they perform in.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for giving me life, with the opportunity to flourish into a woman who is able to chase her dreams and for being there every step of the way. I would also like to thank my Chair, Dr. Sue Steiner and committee member, Dr. Judy Vang. Thank you for your time, patience, and unconditional support during my thesis; and for always being present in the midst of a pandemic. Also, thank you to my dearest friend and mentor Zohra Saulat who stood by my side, encouraged me daily and was a reminder that nothing worth doing is done in isolation. You all have impacted my life in positive ways. Lastly, in hopes through more research such as this, I hope the educational inequalities will soon be obsolete. Despite an individual's race, gender, ethnicity, demographic or socioeconomic background, everyone deserves complete access to an equal educational experience.

“Education is the most powerful weapon with which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela
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This study investigates impostor syndrome symptoms and examines daily experiences among Black female students, who attend a predominantly White university in Northern California. The impostor syndrome “phenomenon” is a physiological pattern that creates feelings of self-doubt, lack of belonging, and incompetence, despite prominent achievements and accomplishments. However, the original theory was conceptualized by a group of White women; which may not acknowledge culturally relevant influences for Black female students such as race, gender, or racial discrimination. Furthermore, only a few studies focus on impostor syndrome with Black female students and their educational experiences (Walker, 2018). This study shows that participants reported frequent daily struggles on campus while having moderate levels of imposter feelings. Data analysis revealed there was no correlation between impostor syndrome and participants' daily experiences in higher education. Yet, there was a strong identified relationship between impostor syndrome symptoms and experiences of daily struggles with topics of: lack of a sense of belonging, isolation, self-doubt, and low-self-esteem. It is essential for academic institutions and their occupants to recognize and understand the experiences of Black female students to ensure stronger support for them academically, culturally, and professionally. Future implications from this study on practice, research, policy, and directions are discussed.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

In America, Black women face systems and communities that constantly remind them that the professional and educational spaces they occupy are reserved for people other than them. This can be observed through a multitude of microaggressions such as stereotypical leaders, faces on department walls, campus monuments, and an endless stream of subtle words and gestures that work to nudge them into limited spaces (Torino, 2019). Added to the environment are overt and subtle racial phrases towards Black people such as, “You are pretty for a Black girl,” “Can I touch your hair?” and often when Black students are seen on university campuses they are approached with, “Do you play sports?” The common perspective that members of the dominant culture have about Black people is that they and their bodies are best used for physical labor (Steinfeldt, 2010). Deep rooted in such racialized views from the time when pseudo-science was used to legalize and legitimize the enslavement and abuse of Black bodies is the distorted notion from Whites that Blacks are on campus only to play sports (Steinfeldt, 2010). These unwelcoming atmospheres, including universities and their educators who are disproportionately non-Black, all, whether deliberate or not, contribute to outcomes that work their way into the subconscious of Black women. This experience can be described as “imposter syndrome” (Clance & Imes, 1978). According to Clance and Imes (1978), imposter syndrome is:

The psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments… Despite outstanding academic and professional accomplishments, evidence of superior intellectual functioning, those experiencing this phenomenon remain convinced that they are frauds, and do not deserve all they have achieved (p. 1).
Background

Women are systematically socialized to feel inferior, but Black women have further complications (Collins, 1986). The major social institutions, religion, the medical field, education, and media support and reinforce the ideology that women are less than men. These institutions also support and reinforce Black inferiority. Including major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, all use a White male figure to represent the omnipotent. God, Allah, Yahweh all are subtly or overtly, White and male. The images of the savior are portrayed in houses of worship as blue eyed, pale skinned men who are the son of the almighty. The pews in churches, especially in Black communities, are filled 75 to 80 percent with women, yet the leadership is predominantly male (Pew Research, 2021). The books and literature of the dominant religions reinforce patriarchy; for example in the Bible 1 Corinthians 14:35 reads:

34 women are to be silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. 35 If they wish to inquire about something, they are to ask their own husbands at home; for it is dishonorable for a woman to speak in the church (English Standard Version, n.d.).

Hospitals have a history of medical experimentation on Black families and Black women in particular. Harriet Washington’s Medical Apartheid (2008) details the horrific, illegal, and inhumane treatment Black people were subjected to under the claim of medicine. Washington documents how medical institutions throughout the country used unwitting or unwilling Black people as human guinea pigs. Recent studies found that Blacks receive inferior service from healthcare providers in comparison to their white counterparts (Bridges, n.d.; National Academy, 2020).

It appears that women in general, but White women in particular, have made substantial gains over the second half of the last century. The Black community generally, and Black women specifically, have not enjoyed the gains. For example, for many years college professors
were only White men, and now there is diversity, which includes a wide range of people, but disproportionately White women. There are still very few Black women. Through obvious wage gaps, professional positions, and even affirmative action that was created for the upward mobility of minorities, White women have been the beneficiary (NCES, 2020). From a young age, Blacks subconsciously are socialized to second guess themselves, as they have to face their social status, gender, their Blackness, and socio-economic condition within a larger societal context beyond the Black community. Due to these early life experiences creates symptoms of depression, lack of self-confidence, anxiety, and frustration related to inability to meet self-imposed standards of achievement within the Black community. These symptoms align with the imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978).

From a social work perspective the present and historical micro and macro aggressions presented above are forms of social injustices, aimed towards a disadvantaged population. Generational trauma has resulted in a focus on self-reliance as the best way to respond to systems one cannot control. For instance, Lipsky and Burk (2009) share:

> Chance has never yet satisfied the hope of a suffering people. Action, self-reliance, the vision of self and the future have been the only means by which the oppressed have seen and realized the light of their own freedom.” - Marcus Garvey, National Hero of Jamaica and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (p. 117).

**Purpose of the Study**

To better understand how imposter syndrome affects Black women in higher education, this research study aims to answer the following three research questions:

1) Are Black female students experiencing daily struggles in higher education?

2) Are Black female students experiencing imposter syndrome in higher education?
3) Are Black female students’ daily experiences in higher education correlated with symptoms of imposter syndrome?

This quantitative research project surveyed individuals who identify as Black female students enrolled at CSU, Chico. The study investigated the emotional and mental feelings Black female students encounter in higher education that are perhaps correlated with the symptoms of imposter syndrome. This thesis (a) provided an understanding of the historical context of Black women and their experiences in higher education that may contribute to the development of imposter syndrome and (b) determined if Black female students’ experience in higher education are correlated with symptoms of imposter syndrome. The research included online surveys for privacy and comfortability for participants. The researcher used snowball and purposive sampling methods of the targeted group. With the findings, the researcher was able to determine if Black female students’ daily experiences in higher education are correlated with symptoms of imposter syndrome.

As educational institutions and communities become more diverse, it is hoped that the outcomes of this study will contribute to increasing the knowledge of educators and service providers and guide in implementing and strengthening supportive programs and services for Black female students. The researcher’s interest in this project has been influenced by personal experience in higher education and observation as a member of this marginalized group.

**Key Terms**

It is important to define the terms that will be presented throughout the course of this paper to confirm clarity and understanding of how they are being used. The term African American comes from a racial label to describe an individual who is of African descent who is
now considered an American; they are descendants of the European American slave trade or they
migrated to America (Martin, 1991). The term African American is considered academically
appropriate to use during scholarly writing. The term Black comes from a political identity. The
writer prefers this term and it will be used throughout this paper in reference to those who
identify, fit the phenotype or description of African American. The term imposter syndrome is
defined as “internal experience of intellectual phoniness in people who believe that they are not
intelligent, capable or creative despite evidence of high achievement” (Clance & Imes 1978, p.
1).
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The racial politics of America is hazardous to the health of Black women. White supremacy and patriarchy are the ideology of America and are reinforced through its institutions. Slavery, religion, health, media, and education perpetuated the subjugation of Blacks with countless forms of brutality, including rape, beatings, and burning of homes. This treatment is exacerbated for Black women. The unsettling history of Black people, especially Black women, is replete with examples of trauma. The kidnap and enslavement of an entire race of people itself are beyond devastation. Instead of a culture which offers repair, Blacks face constant social and political degradation through the same American social institutions that gave legitimacy to and reinforced legalized slavery, segregation, and discrimination.

Both legal and extra-legal social and political pressures were used to control the lives of Black people. Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, segregation, and police brutality helped to limit the average experiences of the emancipated. The term “Sun Down Towns,” for example refers to a practice where Blacks were not allowed to live or be seen after dark, if so, risked being publicly murdered (Loewen, 2006). This resulted in the religious reflection of women's role, current health disparities, the media's portrayal of what Black women’s role are within society, and has contributed to specific physiological outcomes and educational disparities. This section is to enlighten readers on the history and current events that have produced and exacerbated the imposter syndrome among Black women’s experience in America. Please be mindful, there are many more contributing factors that are beyond this scope, that were not able to fit into this section.
**Bondage**

The phrase, “historical trauma” refers to a condition caused by the experience of a person or group. The bloodline of the group and their immediate family members who do not have the direct experiences of these traumatizing events and still emotionally endure the outcomes of these occurrences generations later (Mohatt et al., 2014). Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart conceptualized the phrase historical trauma. This helps to bring into light the vestiges of the enslavement of Blacks and the Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS).

After twelve years of quantitative and qualitative research, Dr. Joy DeGruy developed the term PTSS. The term refers to the consequences of multigenerational oppression from centennial ages of institutionalized racism and chattel slavery (Leary & Robinson, 2018). The long but summarized timeline of the Black experience in America includes Chattel Slavery from 1619 through 1865. Chattel Slavery in America codified Blacks as personal property, bought and sold as commodities, similar to how farmers owned cattle. The inhumane treatment of Black people under American chattel slavery lasted 246 years. This was followed by lynchings shortly after emancipation in 1863, and for over 100 years, Blacks were terrorized by White ritual violence in the form of public murders (Wilkerson, 2020). Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and other forms of social control were designed to reinforce segregation and stop the advancement of Blacks. These laws included prohibiting public interaction such as petty seating, eating, and restroom regulations enforced against Blacks (Horne, 2014).

With the approaching year 1866, the United States could no longer legitimize the overt and inhumane treatment of Black people, so subtle and more covert approaches would produce the same outcomes. Sharecropping replaced slavery and helped to restore the conditions of the slave and slave owners. It was a disguised form of slavery, as Blacks worked for free under
similarly harsh conditions to create wealth for White America. The first American terrorist organization, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), helped suppress any thoughts of equality or justice the newly emancipated Blacks may have had. For visual purposes, imagine mob sizes that replicated the recent pro-Trump rioters who stormed the Capital on January 6, 2021, and brutally attacked a Black woman, Berlinda Nibo (Barrett et al., 2021; Independent, 2021).

The Great Migration and Urbanization of Blacks began in 1915 and continued through 1968 but did not stop the inhumane social conditions America inflicted on Blacks (Horne, 2014). Blacks abandoned the injustices of sharecropping abuse and rushed headlong north into the mainstream only to endure segregated housing and employment. In 1919, “Red Summer” was a 13-day campaign of racial terror on the south side of Chicago, resulting in 23 Blacks and 15 Whites dead, 537 people were injured, and over 1,000 Black families were left homeless. From 1968-1975, Blacks were largely impacted by the Welfare Era. The Welfare Era was when unemployment rates within the Black community were at an all-time high, and education and industrial jobs were at their all-time low. Drugs, crime, and family disintegration became relevant throughout inner cities (Horne, 2014). More importantly than the social problems Blacks faced was the justification of ever increasing numbers of police under the pretense to help (Vitale, 2018; Davis, 2018; Alexander, 2011).

From 1975-1990, the Black communities throughout America experienced increased poverty and mass incarceration; this was also known as the Crack Era. The Crack Era developed through government implantation of illegal drugs into urban areas (Alexander, 2011). Resulting in concentrated policing, drugs having a major impact on women and children, and the mass imprisonment of Blacks (Horne, 2014). The war on drugs, in sum, was full assault on Black people, the police were the soldiers of the White supremacy efforts.
From 1985 to the present day is known as the era of the Institutionalized Generation, those who were born after the Crack Era from the mid 1980’s to the present. The harsh living conditions and lack of resources contributed to the Black community is subjugated and dependent on the mercy of the racist dominant culture. Black people throughout the country had to rely on the meager and limited access to social welfare programs such as foster care, food stamps, Section 8 housing, government assistance, healthcare insurance, and basic needs. The domination of the white culture produced a form of internalized inferiority where Black communities were forced to depend on their oppressors (Horne, 2014).

Medical

It is evident, that the historical trauma of slavery impacts the health of Black women. While enslaved from 1619-1865, Black women were publicly stripped nude and auctioned for their reproductive ability (Prather et al., 2018). Black bodies were routinely abused as well as being raped for pleasure by their masters or owners. Black women aborted their pregnancies to avoid bringing a child into the diabolic conditions of America. While these events occurred, nonconsensual gynecological and reproductive surgeries were performed on Black female slaves and then later unsuspecting emancipated Black women. Racist stereotypes and psuedo-science led many medical professionals to believe Black women did not feel pain as white women and thus used no anesthesia while they practiced perfect medical procedures (Washington, 2008). This form of torture continued from 1865-1965, as did rape, nonconsensual medical experiments, compulsory sterilization, and lynching with the inclusion of female castration.

There was little to no healthcare for impoverished Blacks due to Jim Crow laws enforcing lack of access to equal health services as Whites. Between 1955-1975, the continuation of
lynching, unequal rights, and violence towards Black women continued. Further, from 1975 to the current 2000s, unequal health care has been alive and well (Prather et al., 2018). Currently, these acts of sexual violence towards Black women from slave masters to health providers are traumatizing and aid the belittlement of Black women, resulting in their feeling inferior to men, especially, white men. Marion Sims who is considered the “father of modern gynecology” contributed to the countless performance of reproductive surgeries without any anesthesia. In modern day healthcare racist stereotypes and pseudo-science have medical professionals believe Black women have thicker or tougher skin and do not feel pain as much as white women (Ojanuga, 1993). This leads to the mistreatment and lack of proper healthcare to black women.

Contemporary mainstream healthcare is dangerous and sometimes has grave consequences. Black women’s experiences within the medical industry are often trivialized. The infamous stealing of the cells of Henrietta Lacks (Washington, 2008) and the close call of World Champion Tennis Star Serena Williams are representative of the inability of the dominant culture to see Black women as deserving of human rights (Roeder, 2020). Financial status and level of education does not protect Black women from dying at the hands of healthcare providers. The story of Sharlon Irving is an example. Dr. Irving held a Ph.D in Sociology, was a Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, where she had been a lieutenant commander, and an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is one of the prestigious public health institutions in the U.S. (Martin, 2017). Despite her status she fell into the statistics of the health disparities and fatalities among Black women. Recent CDC data reports that Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy related-causes than white women (Centers, 2019). Shalon Irving died at the age of 36 from medical complications after she gave birth to her child.
Religion

Religion has been a form of power over women and a method to control the Black community for centuries. Religion was first introduced to Black slaves by their masters and was designed to give hope during their enslavement; in hindsight, it was a distraction to the obvious oppression (Harrill, 2000). Religion was used as a power mechanism; it expanded from the use of reinforcing slavery in western colonization to ultimately the oppression of women. Over time, religion has manipulated the subjugation of women. For instance, mass raping, marital abuse, and bride burnings occurred in the eyes of God. The history of religion has produced a social context that women are second class citizens. The women who still choose to participate in religious activities are still not seen as gender equal (Greene, 2008). Former President Jimmy Carter stated the following during his speech to the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Australia (2009):

Women are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many faiths, creating an environment in which violations against women are justified. The belief that women are inferior human beings in the eyes of God gives excuses to the brutal husband who beats his wife, the soldier who rapes a woman, the employer who has a lower pay scale for women employees, or parents who decide to abort a female embryo (para. 19).

These comments from President Carter indicate that religion has subjugated women and violated women's rights (Carter, 2009). Another example of discrimination against women is written within the biblical references of both the Qur’an and Bible. In the Bible, 1 Timothy 2:12, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence”

In Deuteronomy 22:13, 14, 21:

If any man takes a wife, and goes into her, and detests her, and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, ‘I took this woman, and when I came to
her I found she was not a virgin’. She shall be brought to the door of her father’s house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. (Biblia, n.d.)

In the Qur'an 2:282 and 16:57-59:

… and call upon two of your men to act as witnesses; and if two men are not available, then a man and two women from among such as are acceptable to you as witnesses, so that if one of them should make a mistake, the other could remind her" (2:282). And they ascribe daughters unto God, who is limitless in His glory, whereas for themselves [they would choose, if they could, only] what they desire; for, whenever any of them is given the glad tidings of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger, avoiding all people because of the [alleged] evil of glad tiding which he has received, [and debating with himself:] shall he keep this [child] despite the contempt [which he feels for it]—or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh, evil indeed is whatever they decide! (16:57-59). (Hassan, 2016)

In author Robert Jones’ (2020) in his book White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity, explains how Whites use Christianity to perpetuate White supremacy. Jones' upbringing and experience in the Southern Baptist Church led him to pursue his Masters’ degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He shares while being heavily involved in the practice of Christianity not once was the civil rights or the oppression of Black people mentioned. Black communities and historical Black leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. acknowledged and supported Christianity. Jones expresses that the Christian faith supported and encouraged the oppression and enslavement of Black people (Jones, 2020).

The Klu Klux Klan was the first American terrorist organization that helped suppress any thoughts of equality or justice for Blacks and terrorized them for decades in the name of God. Their religious rituals were burning a Christian cross to purify and lynchings were a common form of vigilante justice during the 19th century (Baudouin, 2011). These are a few of the many other forms of religion that justify the inhuman treatment of Blacks and represent the role of women as submissive, servants, less than a man, and used as sexual and abused objects.
Over the 400 years of oppression towards Black women, stereotypes have been developed and are still present today in mass media. From 1619, White slave masters created negative stereotypes of Black women, such as (a) Jezebels, who are hypersexual, (b) Mammies who are seen as overweight, happy, and helpful, and the (c) Sapphire who is considered the angry Black woman (Balaji, 2008). These stereotypes have followed into the present day. The historical characteristics transitioned into modern depictions of now; (a) welfare queens who are hypersexual schemers, the (b) video vixen who is a loose woman, and the (c) gold digger who exploits men’s generosity of giving (Balaji, 2008). Growing technology provides unlimited and uncensored Internet access to resources that will spread the specific perceptions. Now, more than ever before, Blacks and Black women have been incorporated in the media; yet, these inclusions are not always positive representations. For instance, Black women in music videos of male artists are displayed in provocative poses, exposed body parts, and are competing for the attention of the artist or his entourage (Balaji, 2008). Another example shows the new male artists named Blueface, who released a music video in early January 2019 called, “Thotiana.” Blueface’s video displays half naked Black women flocked around him as he lyricize about his financial gains and womanizing of multiple females (WorldStar2018).

Furthermore, Black female artists also represent Black women in an oversexualized role similar to male artists. The 2019 hip-hop group called “City Girls” released a music video called “Twerk.” In this video multiple Black women were on their hands and knees with their tongues out while touching their bodies in sexualized ways. Adding to this behavior the lyrics were about financial gain from the men who lust for them (YouTube, 2019). This gives their viewers the opportunity to create various opinions on what women of colors’ morals, goals, and values...
may be. In sum, oversexualized roles of Black women in the media may be considered a form of entertainment, but when this is often what society sees for the image of Black women, it can release damaging messages. The music industry has many gifted Black women artists, yet the production and utilization of Black women's sexuality within mainstream hip-hop reflect only with the historical characters of Black women as the sexual, promiscuous, jezebels that are available for men's pleasure (Balaji, 2008).

In addition to music media, the message of beauty in media is framed around White women. Beauty standards are made-up to be “fair” white skin, straight blonde hair, blue-eyed women of European descent. These are socially constructed standards that reinforce racism against dark-skinned people. Pigmented skin tone, the assets of curvy hips, full lips, coarse hair, and larger derrieres are not valued in a racist society (Sanders et al., 2005). Another stereotype is the angry Black women. Within television sitcoms, Black women are displayed as mean, rude, violent, loud, and reckless (Reid, 2013). One example is the most current and popular television show called Empire. Loretha Cookie Lyon, the main character, is the wife of Lucious Lyon, and mother of three boys; she is portrayed as an ex-incarcerated individual released from a 17-year prison sentence, and on- screen, her behavior reflects as a strong, sassy, independent character. Yet, she is viewed as ill-mannered, unpleasant, dangerous, and argumentative (Fandom, 2015).

Music videos and media as a medium projects negative stereotypes about Black women.

**Education**

Since the beginning of the American experiment, the idea of a literate Black woman was obsolete. Williams (2005) shared how Black men and women slaves worked as a collective to gain any educational opportunities for their people. Blacks read even with the consequences of
brutal violence or death if their slave owners found out (Williams, 2005). Black women played a significant role in the attempts to self-education. From the division of gender during slavery, Black women who were forced to work in the master’s house were exposed to conversations and information that they would share with their enslaved brothers and sisters. For example, Williams (2005) shares the stories of illiterate Black women who memorized letters, notes, newspapers, and anything they found in their masters’ home to share with other slaves who decode the meaning of the messages (Williams, 2005). Black women would go to great lengths to engage with the White masters’ children to gain the little literacy they could:

Women who worked inside the owner’s household could entice their young white charges to pass on what they learned in school. Alice Green recalled that her mother had learned to read by keeping a schoolbook in her bosom all the time and asking the white children to tell her everything they had learned in school each day. In this way she learned enough to teach school once slavery ended. Likewise, Allen Allensworth’s mother encouraged him to “play school” with his young master who attended school every day. (Williams, 2005, p. 24)

Following the ending of slavery, Blacks had more obstacles ahead of them. Not only the Jim Crow laws, which aided in the segregation of schools, Black women also faced sexism and the division of labor. White America valued education for men, not women, thus challenging Black women to maintain a role at home and raising children (Williams, 2005).

Consider education itself an experience that has traumatizing an alienating effect on Black people in general. According to Educationdata.org (2021) Black students have the highest student loan debt compared to any other racial ethnic group. As Black graduates, 40% have student loan debt from graduate school. In comparison, 22% of White college graduates have graduate school debt. Over 50% of Black student loan obtainers reported their net worth is less than they owe in student loan debt. Additionally, 46% of Black student borrows reported they were mostly likely to put off buying a home. This uncontrollable stress may have a significant
effect on indebted Black people from pursuing personal gains, wealth, and financial decisions (Educationdata.org, 2021). Further, women hold 58% of all student loan debt, and female students who obtain loans have average debt of 9.6% higher than their male counterparts following their first year of graduation and women take an additional two years on average to pay off student loans (Educationdata.org, 2021). According to American Association of University Women (AAUW) in a 2020 data analysis, Black women completed their college education with more debt than other women. Aligning with Educationdata.org, AAUW agrees, women take about two years longer than men to repay student loans. In addition, women graduate and leave college to face gender wage gaps, which decreases their chances to pay off student loan debts efficiently.

While Black people face the battles of education inequality, Darity’s et al. (2018) addresses the racial wealth gap in the United States. The report findings summarize that regardless of levels of educational attainments, the average wealth between Black families compared to White families is significantly lower. For example, White households obtaining degrees such as bachelor’s or post-graduate (Ph.D., MD, and JD) are three times wealthier than Black households who hold the same degrees. Darity et al. report that “a Black household with a college-educated head has less wealth than a White family whose head did not even obtain a high school diploma. It takes a post- graduate” (2018, p. 6). They add that “education for a Black family to have comparable levels of wealth to a white household with some college education or an associate degree” (Darity et al. 2018, p. 6).

Data from the Survey of Consumer Finances (2017) reports that even when Black Americans earn an undergraduate degree they are still not able to generate economic equality with Whites. The mean family wealth in 2016 for Black families was $17,600 and Whites were
$171,000. The median family wealth for Blacks was $138,200 and Whites were $933,700 (Dettling, 2017). Black people and particularly Black women are paying more for diminishing returns. They leave one form of oppression, that of education to join another, the world of work.

**Imposter Syndrome**

The imposter syndrome, also known as imposter phenomenon, is feelings of constant self-doubt and belittling of obvious success and self-accomplishments (Clance & Imes, 1978). These feelings have created a type of insecurity, even when accomplishments are obvious, real, and valid. These invented manifestations can range from negative self-talk, double guessing, dwelling on past mistakes, and not feeling equal or good enough. This is not considered a disorder but is a psychological pattern created from personal experiences, influences, and opinions. Clinical Psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes developed the term in 1978. During their five-year study amongst highly educated and successful college women, who earned their Doctor of Philosophy, they found women suffer from it more than men. The women in this study were primarily White middle to upper-class women between the ages of 20 and 45. They indicated the, “imposter phenomenon, imposter syndrome” occurs with much less frequency in men and that when it does occur, it is with much less intensity” (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 1).

Since then, research has shown that men also experience imposter syndrome, but not nearly the rates women do. Clance composed an additional paper recognizing men’s correlation with imposter phenomenon.

Given that anyone can experience imposter syndrome, recent researchers identify greater predictors. Professor Kevon Cokely from the Psychology and African Diaspora Department at the University of Austin, Texas, found that minority members, especially Black students, have an emphasized battle with imposter syndrome. His study found that Black students had
significantly higher levels of stress and anxiety relating to discrimination-related depression that linked to imposter syndrome (Cokley et al., 2013). Dr. Cokely states (as cited in Wong, 2018):

   Can we say discrimination causes impostorism? No, but we know there’s definitely a link between the two,” he said. “Feeling like an impostor can exacerbate the impact of discrimination. This is what we found with African-American students in our study. I suspect that discrimination can also exacerbate the impact of impostorism. (para. 13)

   A similar study was conducted by Bernard et al. (2017) that examined the consistency of racial discrimination and gender in alliance with imposter syndrome and mental health outcomes among Black students. The study consisted of two waves of data collected over an eight-month period between each wave, from two cohorts of first-year students (Bernard et al., 2017). Participants attended a midsize, public, southeastern, predominately White institution (PWI) in the United States. The study recruited 157 students: 107 females (68.2%) and 50 males (31.8%). Cohort’s 1 average age was 19 years old, and Cohort 2 was an average age of 18. The measures utilized were the Clance’s Impostor Scale (CIPS) (Clance & Imes, 1978) a 20-item self-report measure that assesses the extent to which individuals experience impostor feelings or worries. They also used the Daily Life Experiences Scale (DLE) to assess past experiences of racial discrimination, and lastly, to assess mental health. The researchers utilized the Symptom Checklist 90-Revised (SCL-90–R). The SCL-90–R is a 90-item self-report measure created to channel psychopathological symptoms of distress. Among both cohorts, Black female students reported higher persistence of discrimination while having lower levels of distress by racial discrimination, which may create negative mental health outcomes and at higher levels of imposter syndrome. According to Dawn M. Szymanski and Jioni A. Lewis from the University of Tennessee, the phrase “double jeopardy status” describes members of two marginalized groups; such as the one in the study of Black women, which may increase psychological
vulnerability (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). This study underlined the unique challenges Black women may face.

Steven et al. (2018) presented a culturally informed model of imposter feelings among Black graduate students. The study addressed the gap between Clance and Imes CIP model and the authentic educational experiences of Black graduates who attend PWIs. Two research questions guided the investigation: 1) What are the academic experiences of Black graduate students who attend PWIs and 2) To what extent do these experiences align with Clance and Imes’s (1978) conceptualization of the imposter syndrome construct. On account of the researchers' worry about only applying white adjustment models CIP to Blacks’ experiences, focus groups were conducted to facilitate the qualitative investigation to capture complete and accurate understandings of the individual Black students’ experiences. The university’s Black population represented 3% of the graduate student body. The research was only able to recruit 12 students from a large PWI in the southwestern region of the U.S. Through focus group conversation, various statements were made by students. Such as,

When I got accepted [to graduate school], I received a fellowship. And once I found out that no one in our program received the same kind of fellowship I received, and that my fellowship had “diversity” in the title, that made me feel like it didn’t have anything to do with how smart I was, but the fact that I was the only Black person in my program. That probably heightened the IP. And I felt like everyone in my program probably knew I received that fellowship. (n.p.)

On my first day in the program, I thought maybe the other Black female students didn’t show up (laughter), but then by day four, I realized I was literally one of two Black women. I was sad and I was really lonely. (n.p)

My advisor told me that I needed to be more confident or come across as more confident. In my defense, I was trying to restrain it somewhat because I didn’t want to come across as arrogant. And I didn’t want, I didn’t know how my committee would misconstrue that arrogance and add it to me being Black. (n.p.)
After the collection of data, five themes emerged: 1) Awareness of Low Racial Representation; 2) Questioning Intelligence; 3) Expectations; 4) Psychosocial Costs, and 5) Explaining Success. Ultimately, the study depicted a culturally informed model that acknowledges factors that contribute to the characteristics of the development and nurture of impostor feelings in Black graduate students who attend PWIs (Stone et al., 2018).

A similar study by Lige et al. (2016) investigated the correlation between racial identity, self-esteem, and imposter syndrome among Black undergraduate students. The participants were enrolled in both public and private PWIs in the south and midwest regions of the U.S. The study included 112 self-identified Black students who were mainly freshmen and sophomores who completed an online survey. The survey consisted of three areas of inquiry 1) Private Regard, 2) Self-esteem, and 3) Impostorism. Each section validated feelings through a Likert-type scale to gauge feelings. Private Regard assessed participants’ feelings toward Blacks and their membership in the group, while utilizing a six-item Private Regard subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. Self-esteem assessed participants’ feelings of self-esteem through agreement levels to each presented item, while utilizing the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. For instance, “I am proud to be Black” and “I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society.” Impostorism assessed participants’ feelings of being an imposter or academic fraud while utilizing the 20-item CIPS. Data reflected that Private Regard was positively and strongly related to Self-esteem and inversely associated with imposter syndrome. In comparison, Self-esteem was negatively associated with imposter syndrome. The results supported the hypothesis that Self-esteem was a major contributing factor between racial identity and imposter syndrome at a PWI (Lige et al., 2016).
Christ Anice Walker’s (2018) research and dissertation conducted at two universities in North Carolina examined how the imposter syndrome and academic self-efficacy affect the continuation in Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Black female undergraduate students (Walker, 2018). The study included 114 Black students who completed a coupled survey of the CIPS, the Academic Milestone Self-efficacy Scale, and demographic information. After data collection, the multinomial regression analysis was utilized to explain the relationship between imposter syndrome, academic self-efficacy, and the continuation in STEM. Unsurprisingly, the results displayed a minimal amount of Black women graduate with STEM degrees compared to their White counterparts. In addition, results supported a notable negative relationship between the imposter syndrome and academic self-efficacy, and a precisely predictive relationship between academic self-efficacy and the continuation in STEM major. Ultimately this study showed how these three factors affect Black females (Walker, 2018).

A similar study in 2020 examined the experiences of Black doctoral and postdoctoral scholars in STEM that are related to the imposter syndrome. Researcher Devasmita Chakraverty (2020) used a mixed-method approach by utilizing both surveys and interviews. There were 15 participants who took a CIPS survey and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The interview data and survey scale scores had recurring themes in their results. The results reflected moderate to intense imposter syndrome among the 15 Black students, and the interview revolved around six themes that constantly occurred. These themes link to the IP and read as follows: 1) Being the only-one; 2) Lack of belonging; 3) Stereotyping, micro-aggression and judgment; 4) External appearances; and 5) Feeling like the “diversity enhancers,” and 6) Complications of intersecting identities. This study ultimately shows that the imposter syndrome is strongly correlated to an
individual's racial identity that influences one’s experiences in academia and social encounters (Chakraverty, 2020).

Bernard et al. (2017) at the University of North Carolina conducted a study that examined the alliance among racial discrimination, racial identity, and the imposter syndrome in Black college students. The study was divided into two waves: 1) examined the relationship between racial discrimination and imposter syndrome; and 2) examined racial identity; either as a protective factor or increased impacts between racial discrimination and imposter syndrome. Similar to previous research, the participants were located in a Southeastern, PWI in the U.S. The study gathered 157 students with 107 females and 50 males represented. The instruments used in the study were surveys of: a) demographic information; b) The Daily Life Experiences scale (DLE) of Harrell’s (1997) Racism and Life Experiences; and c) the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI-S). The results reflected that racial discrimination was positively related to higher levels of imposter syndrome and racial identity, and students' attitudes towards the meaning of their race had subsequent levels of imposter syndrome. Some racial identity characteristics fluctuated with increased and decreased levels of imposter syndrome and racial discrimination. Ultimately, the study confirmed that experiences of racial discrimination create symptoms of the imposter syndrome, particularly at a PWI, and racial identity is an essential factor to consider when trying to understand Black students relationship between discrimination and their mental health (Bernard et al., 2017).

Lastly, Bernard et al. (2020) investigated John Henryism’s active coping, institutional racial composition (diversity), and the imposter syndrome amongst 266 Black students. John Henryism is a strategy for responding to prolonged stresses or stressors. This unique study collected data from two PWIs and two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) for
comparison. Research shows students attending HBCUs express greater academic success, social support, more positive campus climates, and less race-related stressors than PWI students. On the other hand, PWI students reported significantly higher IP scores, lower levels of John Henryism, and higher levels of social anxiety. Yet, both institutions’ students reported low levels of self-esteem. As expected, results suggested the connection between imposter syndrome, John Henryism, and institutional racial composition (diversity) negatively influences an individual's psychological wellbeing. Ultimately, the study's findings show that imposter syndrome occurs more within settings that are predominately non-Black, including PWI’s (Bernard et al., 2020).

Even individuals who appear to be the most successful admit to suffering from imposter syndrome. For example, Hollywood television star and influential writer Issa Rae admits to her personal battle with IP in the celebrity world; she states, “It’s just been convincing myself that I’m worthy enough to be able to tell these stories, you know?” (Wong, 2018, para. 8). Rae is one of many, Black women who admit to the imposter syndrome reality. Furthermore, writer Julie Ma (2017), interviewed Hollywood successful Black women whose responses read:

**Lupita Nyong’o**

> What’s it called when you have a disease and it keeps recurring? I go through [acute impostor syndrome] with every role. I think winning an Oscar may in fact have made it worse. Now I’ve achieved this, what am I going to do next? What do I strive for? Then I remember that I didn’t get into acting for the accolades, I got into it for the joy of telling stories. —*Time Out*, September 2016 (para. 4)

**Joyce Roche**

> The impostor fears had a greater impact on me early in my career. As I entered corporate America, I faced many unknowns. Being a woman of color in business at a time when very few women were in positions of power, I had to learn by trial and error how I was
supposed to perform. This made me so afraid of being wrong or ‘looking dumb’ that I stayed quiet in meetings. I wanted to make sure everything I said was perfect before I would chance saying anything, and often found myself hearing a guy saying what I had been thinking but was too afraid to say. I did learn fairly early on that my being quiet and not voicing opinions only served to create doubts in the minds of others about my abilities. So I faced the fear and began taking risks to counter any questions about my abilities and me. —The Huffington Post, September 2013 (para. 24)

Tracee Ellis Ross

I remember when I was dropped by my agents early, early on in my career. They said I didn’t pop when I walked into a room. At the time, maybe I didn’t pop when I walked into a room or maybe I didn’t know who I was but it was one of those moments in my life and in my career where I remember crying to my sister and thinking, ‘I don’t know that I can do this as a career. This is too hard.’ And if [doing this] means that people get to make a comment on who I am, I took it very personally and it was the beginning of a lot of growth of me. A lot of what people think of me is none of my business. It kinda doesn’t matter to me. I get to follow my own bliss. I unconsciously set a really clear intention of what I wanted my job and career to be. It was the beginning of who I wanted to be and I made the choice in that moment that I was only going to continue doing acting if it was fun. It has done that. —Vibe, March 2015 (para. 15)

The American environmental conditions are a culmination of multiple sources of oppression imposed on the Black community. Black women encounter a unique form of oppression from racism and sexism. When Black women fight through the layers of discrimination, they are subjected to a self-doubt about whether they belong in professional spaces. This is much like anxiety symptoms that can be paralyzing and often with disastrous outcomes. The self-doubt, the feeling of not belonging, and inferiority are called the imposter syndrome. With societal forces of inferiority through micro to macro messages towards Black women as described previously, one would hypothesize that many African Americans, especially Black women, suffer from imposter syndrome.
CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Double Consciousness

A culmination of the literature review and personal experience in the educational system has led to the conclusion that Black females encounter many unique barriers to academic success in higher education. Historical trauma from slavery, institutionalized racism, lack of connection with faculty and staff, universities, and educators who are disproportionately non-Black, often insensitive, deliberate or not deliberate, along with the ultimate sense of not belonging, all contribute to anxiety (Torino, 2019). Self-doubt and insecurity work their way into the subconscious of Black female students. Black female students develop symptoms consistent with imposter syndrome. William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B) Du Bois’s work on “double consciousness” can help to explain the phenomenon of the imposter syndrome among Black female students as they venture through academia.

Double consciousness was developed by the activist and sociologist Du Bois in 1903. Du Bois (2007) acknowledges the psychological struggle Black people experience of “always looking at one’s self through the eyes” (p. 3) of a racist white society and “measuring oneself by the means of a nation that looked back in contempt” (p. 4). Du Bois believed that Black Folks or Black individuals struggle with feelings of insecurity and unsureness with their souls’ “identity” and base themselves on how they think others in society may view them. Du Bois argued that the prejudices of White society manifest “self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals” (p. 6) in the Black community, and the double consciousness concept is built upon the social encounters they experience.
In depth, Du Bois describes the process as a double-knife effect from their interactions to conceptualize themselves and having to juggle between two identities in order to survive. This is his double consciousness concept, Du Bois states:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, one ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts; two reconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps him from being torn asunder!” (p. 3)

Du Bois summarizes the struggle of how Blacks are at war with themselves in the sense of trying to find one identity when they reside in a society that oppresses and devalues their existence; while struggling impossibly to unite their Black identity with the American identity. This struggle leaves Blacks double-confused, double-stressed, double-triggered, and double-guessing themselves; thus, forces them to view themselves as how society views and treats them.

The historical mistreatment from non-Black people towards African Americans has developed from and into negative stereotypes and perceptions of Blacks. Conceptualizing double consciousness recognizes the conflict Blacks have to endure as they struggle to learn their identity as both being Black and American (Du Bois, 2007). For example, mainstream media sells depictions of Black women as video vixens, nannies, or welfare queens (Gammage, 2016). This results in White America perceiving Black women in stereotypically negative ways. It also influences the minds of young Black girls that this is their intended path for success or only advancement in life.

Individuals become shaped by socialization from the socializing agents and institutions. There are four major socializing agents: family; education; peers; and media. Combined and overlapping the socializing agents are the four major institutions: religion; education; media; and family. The powerful forces of socializing agents and institutions heavily contribute to the
development of an individual's identity and how an individual identifies with the world. For Black women the development of identity includes a history of Black families ripped apart by America, the religious justification for inhumane treatment of Black bodies, the miseducation into servitude, and the media’s projection of the inferiority of Blacks.

As Du Bois stated, “the sense of looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (p. 3) paints the picture of the world where Black people and specifically Black women are degraded, disregarded, mistreated, and dehumanized, it is likely that their perception of themselves will have low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is one of the major contributors to symptoms of imposter syndrome.
CHAPTER IV
METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Prior to conducting the research project, the researcher obtained approval from the California State University (CSU), Chico Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher conducted a cross-sectional, non-experimental, quantitative study exploring the Black female students’ current attitudes and emotions on campus to determine how the Imposter Syndrome symptoms impact their educational experience at CSU, Chico. This research study aims to answer the following three research questions:

1) Are Black female students experiencing daily struggles in higher education?
2) Are Black female students experiencing imposter syndrome in higher education?
3) Are Black female students’ daily experiences in higher education correlated with symptoms of imposter syndrome?

Upon CSU, Chico IRB approval, experienced faculty members who have knowledge and expertise in working with diversity, inclusion, and African American studies were contacted to review the quantitative survey questions and address any cultural issues that may surface. The researcher developed an anonymous, self-administered online survey hosted on the Qualtrics online platform. The Qualtrics platform allowed the participants to complete the survey at their discretion, within their privacy and comfort. The survey instruments included an informed consent, a demographic questionnaire, and two multiple-choice questionnaires measuring the participants’ imposter syndrome symptoms and their educational experiences as Black female students. Once data collection ended, the responses were immediately exported from Qualtrics.
to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with the participants’ name never being associated with their responses.

**Sampling Procedure**

The university chosen for this study was CSU, Chico, located in Chico, California. The university was selected for the study due to its status as a PWI, with a sizable Latinx population, the proximity to the researcher, and the low number of identified Black students. The researcher sought snowball and purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling methods, to obtain access to the target group members. Snowball sampling allowed the researcher to recruit future subjects from among participants’ acquaintances (Etikan, 2015). Additionally, because of the participants' deliberate choice, purposive sampling was used due to the characteristics of the population and the objective of the study (Etikan, 2016). With these two sampling methods, it allowed the researcher to collect data from a target population that can be difficult to reach, and it is hoped that the data obtained will provide an accurate description of the effects of Black female students who may suffer symptoms of imposter syndrome.

To begin the recruitment process, the researcher contacted staff administrators from CSU, Chico, and provided a letter of support justifying the request of student data that shows the representation of all the present Black female students on campus (see Appendix D). The researcher contacted possible CSU, Chico students who fit the criteria to participate in this research via email, as well as acquaintances on social media: Instagram; through a CSU, Chico student-run organization called “Justunitysistas” and the inclusion of a survey link displayed in the CSU, Chico Diversity and Inclusion student newsletter called “The Black Monthly.” The researcher also sought Black faculty and staff to help distribute the survey link to students who met the study criteria.
When students responded to the online survey, the researcher was notified by Qualtrics of the potential participants' responses via email. The Black students make up 2% of the population at CSU, Chico, and 243 are Black women (Chico Facts 2020, Workbook, 2020). Considering COVID-19 and the limitations of the Black female student population, the researcher aimed to gather at least 40 to 50 responses.

**Participation Criteria**

To participate in this study, participants met the following inclusion criteria: full or part-time students at CSU, Chico, identified as Black or African American females, and legally over the age of 18. If the participants met the above inclusion criteria, they proceeded with the informed consent form. Exclusion criteria are individuals who may not have the competency to fully understand the purpose of this study and those who are illiterate in the English language. Participants will not receive any compensation for participation in the study.

**Instruments**

The researcher used Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to obtain survey responses, eliminating the cost of printing and mailing. The survey consists of four instruments. The instruments are the following: (1) Informed Consent (see Appendix A); (2) Demographics (see Appendix C); (3) Daily Struggle Survey (see Appendix C); and (4) Imposter Syndrome (see Appendix C).

**Informed Consent**

Upon accessing Qualtrics, an electronic informed consent was populated for the participants to review before proceeding to the surveys. A hard copy of the document was offered, along with the researcher’s contact information. In the informed consent form, the researcher explained the risks and benefits of the participants’ involvement in this study (see
Appendix B), the purpose of the research, and provided counseling referrals, resources, and how privacy will be maintained. Additionally, the participants were informed that they could skip the question(s) or withdraw from the study and that their name or any identifying information would not be linked to their survey.

Addressing confidentiality in the informed consent is crucial; thus, supplying the survey as an anonymous, self-administered online platform guaranteed the participants' confidentiality. The topic of Black female students and their educational encounters can be a highly sensitive topic that may generate disparity in the answers received if the participants become fearful that their identity could be accessible when participating in the survey. To avoid skewed results, the researcher did not request information that could possibly allow the determination of who provided which information within the survey. Considering the size of CSU, Chico, and the minimal Black population served, the researcher recognized the potential concerns associated with disclosing opinions of the students’ responses and the fear of ramifications that might arise if these opinions are shared with outsiders. Therefore, keeping the confidentiality of responses provided for this study was a priority.

Once the participants have read through the informed consent, they were asked to participate in the study by selecting “yes” acknowledging their agreement and consent to proceed. If “yes” was not selected, participants could not access the surveys and exit the study. The electronic survey was adjusted for the participants to agree to the informed consent before fully accessing the instruments. Participants agreed to participate in research without compensation.

*Demographic Questionnaire*
Following the informed consent is the demographic questionnaire. The researcher created seven demographic questions that inquired about the participants’ age, ethnicity, income, socioeconomic status, academic study, gender identity, and religious practice (see Appendix C). It is imperative that the participant and researcher are aware of who is participating in the survey and determining eligibility. The purpose of the demographic questions is to ensure the study targets the specific audience.

**Daily Struggle Survey**

The DSS is a 21-survey questionnaire which inquired about the participants’ educational experience by asking questions if they ever felt isolated, if they ever were excluded, if they ever were unsupported, if they ever felt uncomfortable, and so forth (see Appendix C). Lastly, the researcher asked participants if they believed they would graduate college based on their current emotions and experiences. The purpose of the 21 DSS questions was to gauge the overall daily struggles of the target population. The DSS questions allowed the researcher to capture the participants' thoughts and feelings about their educational experiences. Reverse scoring was made on 5 of the 21 survey questions. Questions 9-13 pertained to daily struggle questions. For instance, question 9 asked, “I have encounter moments where I have been racialized (asked to touch hair, athleticism, beauty)” if a participant selected “strongly agree” (value = 1), then the value was reversed to a 7.

To calculate the scoring, the researcher summed the numbers of participants' responses to each question to compute the frequency of their daily struggles on campus. This scale was used to measure the research question: Do Black female students experience daily struggles in higher education? Each of the 21 survey questions had seven response options (1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = somewhat agree; 4 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = somewhat disagree; 6 = disagree;
and 7 = strongly disagree). If the total score reflects 36 or less, the participants presented with few experiences of daily struggles; if the score is between 37 and 73, the respondent has experienced moderate daily struggles; a score between 74 and 110 means the respondent frequent experiences of daily struggles; and a score higher than 111 means the respondent often has intense experiences of daily struggles. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the individual experiences daily struggles because of their race.

Imposter Syndrome

The last instrument is the imposter syndrome scale was used to measure the research question: Are Black female students experiencing the imposter syndrome in higher education? The researcher independently developed the imposter syndrome measurement, which consists of an 11-item Likert scale survey (see Appendix C). The imposter syndrome survey questions were based on researchers' prior surveys as a source of comparison. The 11-item Likert scale survey inquired about the participants’ thoughts and emotions with their performance with academic success; by asking questions to determine if they have characteristics of imposter syndrome and, if so, to what extent they are suffering. To calculate the scoring, the researcher summed the numbers of participants' responses to each question to compute how intense imposter syndrome symptoms is among those who completed the survey, similar to CIPS, a scale popularly used to measure the impostor phenomenon (Clance, 1978). Each of the 11 survey questions had seven response options: (1 = neither agree or disagree; 2 = strongly disagree; 3 = disagree; 4 = somewhat disagree; 5 = somewhat agree; 6 = agree; and 7 = strongly agree). If the total score reflects 20 or less, the participants presented with few imposter syndrome symptoms if the score is between 21 and 40, the respondent has moderate imposter syndrome symptoms; a score between 41 and 60 means the respondent frequently has imposter syndrome symptoms; and a
score higher than 60 means the respondent often has intense imposter syndrome characteristics. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the imposter syndrome interferes in the individual's life.
CHAPTER V
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Data was collected using the online Qualtrics survey platform. A total of 76 students participated in the one-time survey. Data was cleaned and screened to eliminate data entry errors. After cleaning the data, a total of 45 respondents successfully completed the survey. The following are the descriptive statistics and frequency distributions of the 45 survey participants.

Demographics

Statistics show 44 of the 45 (97.8%) respondents identify as Black or African American. One participant identified as biracial. With regards to gender identity, all the participants (N = 45) identified as female and 40 of the participants (88.8%) were between the ages of 18-25. When asked what religion participants identify with, the majority (n = 34) (75.6%) responded as Christian, and 10 (22.2%) preferred to self-describe. One (2.2%) participant did not respond (see Table 1).
Table 1

Demographic Factors  N=45

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<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>n = 44</td>
<td>97.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-describe</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
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<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>n = 45</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>n = 20</td>
<td>44.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>n = 20</td>
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<td>30+</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-describe</td>
<td>n = 10</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to state</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Total percent = 100

Daily Struggle

To examine if Black female students experience daily struggles in higher education, the Daily Struggle Survey (DSS) was utilized. The DSS scores were calculated individually by cumulatively summing individual scores to the scale. Scores reflecting 36 or less, the participants presented with few experiences of daily struggles; if the score is between 37 and 73, the respondent has experienced moderate daily struggles; a score between 74 and 110 means the respondent has frequent experiences of daily struggles; and a score higher than 111 means the respondent often has intense experiences of daily struggles. As indicated in Table 3, respondents scored frequent daily struggles in the DSS scale, with a mean of 81.4; the range of responses varied between 46 and 116. The DDS scores indicated there were no participants who scored in the lowest range. According to the scores, participants experienced moderate and frequent daily struggles (see Table 2).
Table 2
*Daily struggle survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total (N)</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Experiences</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>116.00</td>
<td>81.4000</td>
<td>14.53585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imposter Syndrome**

All participants (N = 45) responded to the Imposter Syndrome survey. A total score of 20 or less indicates few imposter syndrome characteristics; a score between 21 and 40 indicates moderate imposter syndrome characteristics; a score between 41 and 60 indicates frequent imposter syndrome characteristics; and a score higher than 60 indicates intense imposter syndrome characteristics. On average respondents who completed the survey scored in the moderate range of experiencing imposter syndrome, with a mean of 31.62, the range of responses varies between 15 and 73. Collectively, the participants experienced moderate levels of imposter syndrome at the time of the study (see Table 3).

Table 3
*Imposter syndrome survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total (N)</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imposter Symptoms</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>73.00</td>
<td>31.6222</td>
<td>12.08923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reliability and Validity**

A reliability test was conducted for both the imposter syndrome and DSS surveys to determine the instruments' effectiveness. The imposter syndrome survey has a Cronbach's Alpha of .882, indicating high reliability. The reliability Cronbach’s Alpha of the DSS survey was .816, which also reflects high reliability. The language of the surveys was clearly and written so
that the participants could comprehend the language and response options. Both instruments were found to have high reliability and provided valid research.

**Correlation**

A correlation statistic was conducted to determine the relationship between Black female students’ daily struggles in higher education and imposter syndrome. Results indicate no relationship, $p > .05$. 
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Overview

This study aimed to examine Black female students’ current experiences and emotions in higher education to determine if they are affected by symptoms consistent with the imposter syndrome. These symptoms, if present, may impact their educational experiences. This study is unique considering it is the first imposter syndrome survey conducted at CSU, Chico focused on Black female identified students. The analysis of recurring topics from responses to a series of survey items helps to measure Black female students’ experiences. These findings support the intentions of the research to determine emotional trauma.

Analysis of Quantitative Results

Responses to the first research question: “Are Black female students experiencing daily struggles in higher education?” indicate Black female students have frequent daily experiences of struggles in higher education. The negative experiences reflected in participants' responses to the survey items specify they experience daily struggles due to the lack of community connection and lack of representation. For example, the Struggle Scale items: 17; 19; and 20 (see Appendix C) highlighted topics of: lack of inclusion; isolation; and self-doubt. The majority of participants (n=36) disagreed with the statement “I see many faculty and staff who look like me,” while more than half of participants disagreed with “I have a strong connection and feel a sense of community on campus” and “I have supportive Black mentors, advisers, and counselors.” These results depict that daily struggles are common for members of this population. The lack of role models for oppressed communities has a huge impact in making individuals feel like they do not belong in academic settings. The absence of representation, leads to the idea there is no
possibility of promotion or success, or how to navigate the realities of stereotypes and stigmas in order to flourish in their environments (Bryant-Davis, 2021).

Answers from the second research question: “Are Black female students experiencing imposter syndrome in higher education?” indicate participants are suffering symptoms of imposter syndrome. For example, the imposter syndrome scale items: 2; 4; 6; and 11 (see Appendix C) highlighted topics of: lack of confidence; lack feelings of intellectualness; minimizing achievements; and lack sense of belonging. More than half of the participants ($n=36$) agreed, “I am often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment even though I generally do well at what I attempt,” while the majority of the participants ($n=38$) agreed to both items “even when others have confidence in me, I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination” and “If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I have accomplished, I tend to downplay the importance of what I have done.” Lastly, nearly all participants ($n=40$) agreed that “the imposter syndrome has caused me to miss out on opportunities.”

The lack of physical representation is just one of many contributors that exacerbate the symptoms of imposter syndrome. Another is the penetrating racist and sexist stereotypes that cause people from oppressed communities to doubt themselves (Bryant-Davis, 2021). There is a perpetual cycle of negative messages that women are not strong leaders because they are too emotional. In addition to the destructive stereotypes that Black people are lazy, unintelligent or lack integrity, Black women face a type of intersectional perception of being not worthy (Bryant-Davis, 2021). Despite the initial battle of being accepted into higher education, then occupying spaces historically reserved for Whites, while proving academic excellence, Black women still doubt their intelligence and ignore their obvious achievements.
Conclusion Relevant to Research Questions

Although the three research questions directing this study were answered by the imposter syndrome scale and the Struggle Scale, a follow up question regarding race and academic achievement was asked to explore if the participants downplay their academic achievements. Not surprisingly, 32 out of the 45 participants agreed that “they downplayed their academic achievements.” Almost half of the participants indicated “they do so because they do not want to intimidate their non-Black colleagues” and “they believe their non-Black colleagues think they are not intellectually intelligent.” The researcher believes not only is racism apparent in institutions, but the intersecting identities of the Black female student heightens their experience. Consider Kimberley Crenshaw’s theory of Intersectionality (Carastathis, 2014). Black females have a multitude of identities that overlap one another, which they have to integrate while navigating personal life and campus life; this consists of race (Black), class (student), gender (female), and individual characteristics (body-type, hair texture, melanin, color shade). These identities that create a Black woman either expose them to positive experiences or expose them to negative experiences. From the presented research, one would agree the Black female experience in America has not been graceful. In the words of Barbara Smith, “Black women, whose experience is unique, are seldom recognized as a particular social-cultural entity and are seldom thought to be important enough for serious scholarly consideration” (Eubanks & Jones, 2014, p. 100).

Hypothesis

The researcher predicted there would be a correlation between Black female experiences and imposter syndrome. The common topics in the participants' frequent daily struggles and topics of the imposter syndrome responses reflect a strong relationship between each other. The
highlighted items in the Struggle Survey show feelings of: lack a sense of belonging; isolation; self-doubt; and low-self-esteem. This is consistent with the feelings of the Imposter Syndrome Items. After evaluating the last research question: “Are Black female students’ daily experiences in higher education correlated with symptoms of imposter syndrome?”; the correlation was not significant. What was expected was a stronger correlation between participants' experiences and imposter syndrome. The researcher considers extenuating circumstances that may have contributed to the lack of correlation, as indicated below.

Although the researcher had validated the survey measurement with Black professionals in academia, it is possible the language used to describe certain concepts may have been misinterpreted by respondents. The term imposter syndrome is interchangeable with the term imposter phenomenon. Clance and Imes (1978), the originators of the concept, suggested using the terminology or title “imposter phenomenon” rather than “imposter syndrome” as the term “syndrome” may be perceived as a medical diagnosis and identified as an illness. Participants may not want to view themselves as sick, ill, or having a disease. The researcher decided to use the title imposter syndrome due to the nature in which it was initially introduced. The researcher wanted to remain consistent in terminology and decided to use the initial term.

Also, it is possible that the Struggle Scale could have been better adapted to tease out symptoms, such as anxiety, depression and other conditions that accompany imposter syndrome. Two examples of questions that examine these conditions are, “Do you have constant feelings of being afraid, as if something awful might happen on campus?” or “Do you have trouble relaxing while in class?” Creating more items focused on anxiety experiences or feelings of depression could have developed a stronger correlation between student experiences and the imposter syndrome.
Another survey error may have been the construction of the survey items. For instance, instead of asking questions with affirmative tones, it might have been better to ask questions with unobjective tones. For example, instead of “I feel comfortable raising my hand in class?” asking “Do you feel comfortable raising your hand in class?” It might have been helpful to eliminate neutral responses, to receive stronger responses. This option within the survey allowed participants to easily opt-out of a response if they were less inclined to share their opinion or experience. This can interfere with data or skew data.

It is possible participants were still reluctant due to the repercussions of sharing their true experiences. For instance, the harsh punishments young Black girls are subjected to and witness for small mistakes. For example, in 2016 a White male officer assaulted a Black high school girl who was seated in her classroom. Officer Ben Fields grabbed the girl around her neck, flipped her over, and dragged her across the ground. In response, another Black female student named Niya Kenny spoke against the assault and said, “What did she do?”. His response was “Hey, I'll put you in jail next.” Niya Kenny was incarcerated later that day (Annamma et al., 2016). In reality, it may be safer in a Black female’s mind to not be critical towards the very institution they are seeking their degree in.

Participants' ages may be considered when future research is conducted because age may cause a separation within the lived experience, resulting in different responses. In other words, it is common that with age people perceive the world differently. Older people have lived experience and more data about the world to make assessments. Furthermore, older respondents may be on campus at different times in their lives and may have different types of assistance.

Lastly, the researcher considered the location where the data was collected. CSUC is historically considered a PWI and recently has gained a high Latinx population. For Black students this may result in low retention rates, especially for Black female students. CSUC has a Black student population of 2.8% and the Black female retention rate is 14% (Workbook, 2016). If this identical study was collected at a historically Black college or more diverse university

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retention rates may have been higher and the targeted population rates may have increased, resulting in more representation and a sense of community for this target population.

These findings may raise awareness of the lack of resources, institutionalized racism, and underrepresentation in the university for students of color, specifically Black students. For future research, this will be considered (a) terminology, (b) create stronger survey items, (c) promising no repercussions for participation to students, and (d) control for age differences.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were heavily examined due to the historical damage of previous research studies on the Black community. Given the size of CSU, Chico and the minimal Black female population served presented the potential concerns of exposing students’ responses and the fear of ramifications that may occur if opinions are disclosed; names of the participants were not associated with their responses. The steps to secure participant confidentiality and anonymity were done through a digital survey platform application called Qualtrics. All the instruments, including the informed consent were imported into Qualtrics. Qualtrics can instantly save the individual responses to a digital program only visible to the researcher and did not leave a paper trail. The topic of discussion may possibly trigger participants’ uncomfortableness; therefore, resulting in psychological harm. To safeguard participants’ well-being, this researcher advised the volunteer participants that upon request, a list of referrals to counseling resources and appropriate services can be provided via email.

Limitations

One of the most significant limitations and challenges to this study was gathering participation from the small number of Black female students relative to the general population at CSUC. The community of Chico, CA is 82% White and 2.1% Black (QuickFacts, 2019). Thus, the Black female student population is limited on campus, and this, combined with the loss of on-campus engagement due to the COVID 19 pandemic, created difficulties recruiting
participants. Yet, for those willing to participate, hesitation may have surfaced and raised many concerns. For instance, participants may be in fear of disclosing information due to possible repercussions. Nationally, Black females are disciplined six times higher than White girls; they are suspended more than 67% of boys as well (U.S. Department, 2014). Thus, fear could be another limitation when data was collected, considering it may have caused restricted responses.

In addition, given the average time to complete the online survey for this study (10-15 minutes), the overall time frame may have contributed to how the participants responded to the questionnaires. Given the students’ state of mind with Zoom fatigue during a worldwide pandemic, this may have been a notable limitation to the accuracy of participants’ responses. This study did not explore the considerations of participants’ needs for support services and whether the support services would acknowledge the participants' challenges. For example, a survey of participants' needs to evaluate the effectiveness of a program design; so that it will support their specific community. Providing this will create a direct service for Black female students. In other words, the researcher could have asked students, “what do they want or need or what will help you succeed?” It is important to remember the student population is only from one university, CSU, Chico and the findings cannot be generalized.

A feasible method to moderate this limitation in the future could be to conduct a mixed-method study. An example of this could be if the research were to collect data from both surveying and interviewing. Interviews may provide an in-depth understanding of participants' personal experiences and needs. Another possibility would be to create a written text component within the digital survey to collect personal feedback and short answers as this would give participants a sense of privacy and security to fully respond in confidence if not comfortable in person. Other limitations to consider: generalizability, insufficient sample size for statistical
measurement, researcher bias, COVID-19 couple with limited time frame may not allow the researcher to pilot the study.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Social Work

Despite the limited participants, responses from the survey provided vital insight into the mental, emotional, and physical experiences of Black female students in higher education, thus allowing for the consideration of numerous implications to social work. The results of this study provide reasons for further larger-scale research on this topic. All 45 participants reflected feelings of self-doubt, a lack of a sense of belonging, low self-esteem, and being isolated on campus. These findings suggest that Black female students attending higher education at one PWI in Northern California are suffering from imposter syndrome.

This study contributes to the social work profession as the field of social work has a focus on serving underprivileged communities (Hepworth et al., 2017). The researchers propose that “Social workers are not the only helping professionals who provide direct services to clients in need. They have a special interest, however, in helping empower members of oppressed groups” (Hepworth et al., 2017, p. 3). Through the literature review, one can identify that Black women have been oppressed and underserved for over 400 years and currently experience similar events. Findings from the study can inform (a) policymakers and educators of the need to create a more inclusive academic experience for Black female students attending CSU, Chico and PWIs (b) inform educational institutions how to better support Black female students in higher education, (c) enlighten readers in American history on the intersection of slavery, religion, education, and
Black women, and (d) encourage those who have suffered or are suffering from imposter syndrome to not fall into subconscious pressures.

**Implications for Social Work Policy**

Specifically, universities might create proposals that require more inclusivity in hiring committees that could result in more diverse staff. Institutions could also require Black mental health counselors to provide a safe setting for students of color seeking services or develop proposals that require study centers or academic spaces for students who identify as Black. These changes would increase the enrollment, retention, and positive experiences of Black identified students, specifically Black female students. Should the previously mentioned suggestions be considered, this will benefit not only an oppressed community but will help academic institutions flourish; especially, CSU, Chico, in their motto of “*Chico State Values Diversity.*”

**Implications for Academic Institutions**

Ultimately, this quantitative research accomplished evaluating the personal experiences among female-identified Black students regarding how the imposter syndrome may influence their educational experience at CSU, Chico. These findings can be used as a possible guide for staff, faculty, and school social workers to review and explore new possibilities of implementing programs or services for Black female students. These findings also provide evidence that the target population may experience mental health concerns, and alternatives for mental health services can be more inclusive. Future conversations amongst staff, faculty, students, and social workers, can initiate changes to create a more diverse and inclusive campus environment. The ultimate goal is to create a culture where Black female students can focus on thriving instead of surviving. “It’s hard to be what you can't see” Marian Wright Edelman (2015).
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APPENDIX A

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL:

THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME AND BLACK FEMALES AT CHICO STATE

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Cara Campbell, a candidate from California State University, Chico (CSU, Chico) Master of Social Work program. The student researcher hopes to learn about the personal experiences among female identified Black students regarding how the imposter syndrome may influence their education attainment as a student at CSU, Chico. This research study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master’s degree, under the supervision of Dr. Sue Steiner at CSU, Chico.

If you decide to participate, **you must be at least 18 years of age or older**, you will be surveyed and respond to a series of multiple-choice questions. The survey will include questions about your attitude, experience and other social encounters you face on campus. The survey instruments take as long as the participant needs to complete. While participating in this study, it is possible that you could feel some discomfort in answering some of the questions. Should the questions trigger some discomfort, please notify the WellCat Counseling Center. Their phone number is (530) 898-6345. WellCat Services also offers resources for individuals suffering from racial trauma (https://www.csuchico.edu/wellcat/race.shtml). If you have any questions regarding their rights please contact the Human Resources Service Office (HRSC) who can be contacted via phone (530-898-3145) or e-mail (irb@csuchico.edu). You always have the option to skip the question(s) or withdraw from the study. Please be mindful that there is no penalty should you skip particular interview questions or withdraw from the study.
Your name or any other identifying information will not be written on your survey. Any information that you share with the researcher will be kept confidential with one exception. As a graduate social work student, this researcher is a mandated reporter; thus, should you disclose current thoughts of harming yourself or others, this researcher will have an ethical responsibility to contact the appropriate authorities in order to protect your health and the community.

Everyone in the study will be given a list of community resources, and the researcher is available to help you connect to community resources, if you desire. You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, but the study may help to increase knowledge, which may help others in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, and whether or not you take part in this study will not affect your course grades or other treatment by your academic institution. If you have questions about the study itself, please contact the researcher, Cara Campbell at Ccampbell51@csuchico.edu or 530-520-9611, or her faculty adviser, Dr. Sue Steiner at sjsteiner@csuchico.edu. If you have any concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact Dr. Sue Steiner at sjsteiner@csuchico.edu.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

PLEASE SIGN HERE: ____________________________
APPENDIX B

Referral List

Please find below a list of agencies offering counseling and other supportive services. If you need assistance with contacting agencies or would like to inquire more information about supportive services, please contact the researchers at the numbers or emails listed above.

Cross-Cultural Leadership Center
Meriam Library, Room 172
530-898-4101
cultural@csuchico.edu
*Academic Hours*
8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Monday–Friday
*Mailing Address*
400 W. First St.
Chico, CA 95929–0747

Office of Diversity & Inclusion
Kendall Hall, Room 109
530-898-4764
diversityoffice@csuchico.edu
*Academic Hours*
8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Monday–Friday
*Mailing Address*
400 W. First St.
Chico, CA 95929–0123

Safe Place
Student Services Center 180
530-898-3030
safeplace@csuchico.edu
*Academic Hours*
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Monday–Friday
*Mailing Address*
400 W. First St.
Chico, CA 95929–0261

WellCat Counseling center
Student Services Center, Room 430
530-898-6345
Appendix B (cont.d)

*Academic Hours*
8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Monday–Friday
Closed Wednesdays from 8:30 a.m.-10 a.m. for Staff Meeting

*Crisis Services*
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Monday–Friday

*24-Hour Service*
Call 530-898-6345

*Zen Den & Massage Chair*
8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Monday–Friday

*Summer Academic Hours*
7 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Monday–Thursday
APPENDIX C

Demographics

1. Which of the following best describes you?

☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic or Latinx
☐ Native American or Alaskan Native
☐ White or Caucasian
☐ Prefer to self-describe __________

2. What is your gender identity?

☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Gender neutral
☐ Non-binary or third gender
☐ Prefer to self-describe __________

3. What is your age?

☐ 17 or younger
☐ 18 - 21
☐ 22 - 25
☐ 26 - 30
☐ 30 +

4. What is your major?

☐ __________

5. What religion do you identify with most?

☐ Christianity
☐ Catholicism
☐ Islam
☐ Judaism
☐ Buddhism
Appendix C (cont.d)

☐ Prefer to self-describe __________

6. Last year your income was?

☐ $0-10,000
☐ $11,000-$20,000
☐ $21,000-$30,000
☐ $31,000-$40,000
☐ $41,000-$50,000
☐ $51,000 and above

7. With your best estimate what socioeconomic status would you identify with?

☐ Upper Class- Elite
☐ Upper Middle Class
☐ Middle Class
☐ Working Class
☐ Lower Class
Daily Struggle

For each question, please select the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over. The purpose of this scale is to gauge the overall daily struggles of the target population. The scale will allow the researcher to capture the participants' thoughts and feelings about their educational experiences.

1. I feel comfortable raising my hand in class. (the reaction)
   - □ Strongly agree
   - □ Agree
   - □ Somewhat agree
   - □ Neither agree nor disagree
   - □ Somewhat disagree
   - □ Disagree
   - □ Strongly disagree

2. I feel my perspective is valued in class. (stares, gestures, tones)
   - □ Strongly agree
   - □ Agree
   - □ Somewhat agree
   - □ Neither agree nor disagree
   - □ Somewhat disagree
   - □ Disagree
   - □ Strongly disagree

3. I receive positive, constructive feedback and praise of my contributions from my instructor?
   - □ Strongly agree
   - □ Agree
   - □ Somewhat agree
   - □ Neither agree nor disagree
   - □ Somewhat disagree
   - □ Disagree
   - □ Strongly disagree
4. I feel comfortable approaching my instructor.
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

5. I feel comfortable visiting my instructor during office hours?
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

6. I feel included and acknowledged in group work with my peers?
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

7. I receive positive feedback and praise for my contributions from my classmates?
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Somewhat agree
8. I feel equally knowledgeable as my peers?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. I have encountered moments where I have been racialized (asked to touch hair, athleticism, beauty).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. I find myself having to code-switch (changing language/tone, eliminating racial identity) in order to give a certain perception?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
Appendix C (cont.d)

☐ Strongly disagree

11. I have felt that I was not good enough because of my race or gender?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

12. I often feel as if I am being stared at on campus due to my race?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

13. I often feel I am invisible on campus?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

14. I feel comfortable utilizing resources and support services such as the (student learning center, food pantry, counseling)?
Appendix C (cont.d)

15. I feel comfortable joining extracurricular activities on campus?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16. I feel comfortable exploring new spaces and new opportunities on campus?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

17. I see many faculty and staff who look like me?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
Appendix C (cont.d)

18. I have supportive (Black) role models on campus?

☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

19. I have supportive Black mentors, advisers, and counselors?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

20. I have strong connections and feel a sense of community on campus?

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

21. I believe that I am capable of graduating college?

☐ Strongly agree
Appendix C (cont.d)

☐ Agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
Appendix C (cont.d)

Imposter Syndrome

For each question, please select the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over. The purpose of this scale is to inquire about the participants’ thoughts and emotions with their performance with academic success; to determine if they have characteristics of Imposter Syndrome and, if so, to what extent they are suffering.

1. I rarely do a project or task as well as I would like to do it.
   - [ ] Strongly agree
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Somewhat agree
   - [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   - [ ] Somewhat disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Strongly disagree

2. I am often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment even though I generally do well at what I attempt.
   - [ ] Strongly agree
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Somewhat agree
   - [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   - [ ] Somewhat disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Strongly disagree

3. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success by luck, coincidence, or by mistake.
   - [ ] Strongly agree
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Somewhat agree
   - [ ] Neither agree nor disagree
   - [ ] Somewhat disagree
Appendix C (cont.d)

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. Even when others have confidence in me, I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. When I’ve succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I have accomplished, I tend to downplay the importance of what I have done.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
Appendix C (cont.d)

7. If I am going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. I feel bad and discouraged if I am not the best or at least very special in situations that involve achievement.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. I am disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. I am afraid people important to me may find out that I am not as capable as they think I am, or that I lack the required ability or knowledge.
Appendix C (cont.d)

11. The imposter syndrome (makes you feel like you don’t belong) has caused me to miss out on opportunities.
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Somewhat disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree