South Dakota State University

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2014

Who Am I? Who Am I Supposed to Be? First Generation Graduate Student Experiences of Identity Negotiation

Nicole B. Lounsbery
South Dakota State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/etd

Part of the Sociology Commons

WHO AM I? WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE? FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE

STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

BY

NICOLE B. LOUNSBERY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Major in Sociology

South Dakota State University

2014

WHO AM I? WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE? FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

This dissertation is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree and is acceptable for meeting the dissertation requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this dissertation does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Meredith Redlin, Ph.D.   Date
Major Advisor

Mary Emery, Ph.D.   ' Date
Department Head, Sociology

Dean, Graduate School   Date

In memory of my brother Jeff, who never had a chance to pursue his dreams. I can only hope to come close to the person he would have become.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all, I would like to thank the amazing women who agreed to participate in this study; I hope it was as meaningful for them as it was for me. I would also like to acknowledge several important people who have helped make this dissertation a reality.

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Meredith Redlin, for her support and mentorship throughout this process and most importantly, for listening to my doubts and helping me believe in myself. I would like to thank Dr. Diane Kayongo-Male for everything she has taught me; for setting high standards, providing valuable feedback, and being an incredible role model. I would like to thank Dr. Jake Jantzer for helping me with the quantitative part of this dissertation, and also for his ongoing support and encouragement. I would like to thank Dr. Zhengrong Gu for being part of my committee, and for his input and support. I would also like to thank our department head, Dr. Mary Emery, for her guidance and support during the course of my graduate program.

Next, I would like to thank Dean Doerner and my colleagues in the Graduate School for their support and encouragement over the last 2 years. I am so grateful to work with such wonderful people. I would also like to thank Norm Braaten for being a valued colleague and friend since my arrival at SDSU.

I would like to thank my best friend, Stacey Denison, who was always there for me when I needed to talk, laugh, or cry.

I would especially like to thank my late father, whose memory and life example continually motivated me to keep working hard, despite obstacles and challenges along the way. I would like to thank my mother for her endless love and never letting me

forget what was really important in life. I would also like to thank my mother-in-law for her support and willingness to help out in so many ways.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Matt, and my three beautiful children: Cain, Cole and Camryn. I know I would not have been able to get through this without their love and support, as well as their patience and sacrifice over the last 5 years. The most important thing to me has always been to make them proud.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDICES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

WHO AM I? WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE? FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE

STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

NICOLE B. LOUNSBERY

2014

The purpose of this study is to examine how the intersections of race, class, gender and place impact identity negotiation among first generation female graduate students and how these identities are influenced and shaped by the structures and role expectations of both home and academic environments. This research addresses the scarcity of literature on first generation *graduate* level students, as well as the lack of intersectional research in identity and student development studies. Additionally, there has been a dearth of literature focusing on class, race, and place, and how these identities influence women's feelings of being academic imposters. Thus, the extensive and more profound experience of graduate education has the potential to shed light on whether identity struggles related to the imposter phenomenon persist throughout the life span.

An intersectional analysis revealed that female first generation student experiences were characterized by a lack of knowledge both prior to and during college. This sense of 'not knowing' across the intersections of race, class, gender and place strongly impacted respondents' identity, as well as their entire college experience. Repercussions included barriers to personal and academic progress, as well as systemic isolation, resulting in increased self-sufficiency and lack of belonging.

Qualitative findings revealed a strong connection between female first generation graduate students lack of knowledge and the imposter phenomenon. The intersection of

gender, class and race created a situation of double and triple disadvantage for students, which increased feelings of fraudulence and fear of being unmasked. Thus, first generation poor to working class female students of racial/ethnic minority are at higher risk for developing characteristics of the imposter phenomenon that can more profoundly affect their identity, and in a larger sense, their overall well-being.

Quantitative findings indicate that higher family income, higher community population, and higher maternal educational status are significantly associated with lower scores on a measure of imposter feelings, Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS, Clance 1985). Conversely, Native American racial identity was associated with higher CIPS scores, indicating intense imposter feelings. Native American respondents also reported experiencing a heightened sense of isolation and "token" status throughout their educational experiences, as well as greater difficulty negotiating identity in both home and academic cultures.

Chapter One

Introduction

Female First Generation Graduate Students and Identity Negotiation

The pursuit of higher education represents a pivotal time in identity development. For first generation college students, it is a time of significant identity negotiation, involving "substantial cultural, as well as social and academic transitions" (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini 2004:250). The personal and social identities of first generation college students are negotiated over time along with many other stressors (Orbe 2008). However, less is known about how female first generation college students at the graduate level negotiate identity at the intersections of race, class, gender and place. As women are entering graduate school in ever larger numbers, an increase of 62 percent from 2000-2010; such knowledge is valuable and necessary (National Center for Education Statistics 2012).

In this study, comparisons will be made between female first generation graduate students to identify similarities and differences in identity negotiation. Social class locates individuals in society, giving them particular vantage points from which to describe, explain, or interpret a social context (Wells 2002). The intersection of gender and social class leads to a different experience or vantage point, while the addition of race and place creates even more variation in identity. It is useful to identify significant similarities as well as differences between groups that share the same position in the social hierarchy. Even though diversity exists within and between groups at the

intersections, shared lived experiences can and do occur, providing an important context for understanding and future application.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the intersections of race, class, gender and place impact identity negotiation among first generation female graduate students and how these identities are influenced and shaped by the structures and role expectations of various environments, including home and academia.

Research questions for this study include:

1. How is identity negotiated at the intersections of race, class, gender and place for female first generation college students in graduate school? What repercussions, if any, occur within various contexts, including home and academia?

2. To what extent do imposter feelings affect female first generation graduate students' identity negotiation? Does the *imposter phenomenon* manifest differently across the distinct lenses of intersectionality?

3. How does the intersection of race, class, gender, and place affect first generation female graduate students' ability to negotiate multiple identities in order to adapt to both home and academic environments, and what are implications for success?

Background to the Study

My choice to study female first generation graduate students and identity is based on the following rationale: I am a *first generation female graduate student* who has struggled with my own identity for many years; therefore I am interested in whether first generation status influences how female students negotiate identity, the degree of influence on identity, and how that may affect academic or personal success. According to Schroeder and Mynatt (1993), female graduate students are more likely than males to not complete PhD's, to only obtain master's degrees, and to consider withdrawing before completing a graduate degree (p. 555).

I am using autoethnography as a research method, making it necessary to relate similar feelings, themes, and experiences of "being female" with female students. Autoethnography is a "form of ethnography that uses the self as a lens to understand a wider culture and in turn uses the experiences of others to better understand the self" (Balaam 2011:1). I propose to closely examine how being female across the intersections of race, class and place represents challenges, obstacles, and/or privileges within higher education. That is, I will identify how we encounter challenges, obstacles and/or privileges arising from our unique identity in two (gender and race), if not three (gender, race, class) or more categories of difference.

The *imposter phenomenon* (IP) is something that is very intriguing to me, mainly because I can personally identify with so many IP characteristics. I thought that other first generation graduate students might feel the same way and I was curious as to what extent the IP exists and whether it has an effect on identity negotiation. Additionally, females are more likely than males to display characteristics of the imposter phenomenon. Past research indicates there has been a "pervasiveness and longevity of imposter feelings in high achieving women," despite repeated successes (Clance and Imes 1978:242; Clance 1985).

When compared to men, women are more negatively affected by imposter issues, exhibit much higher imposter fears, and have higher imposter phenomenon scores (Clance and O'Toole 1988; Kumar and Jagacinski 2006; Mack 2006; McGregor, Gee and Posey 2008). Kumar and Jagacinski (2006) go on to say that women experiencing imposter fears have little faith in their intelligence and "must outperform others to feel competent" (p. 10). In relation to college students, King and Cooley (1995) found

substantially greater imposter ratings for female versus male college students. In a recent study, Jostl et al. (2012) found that female doctoral students both suffer more from impostor feelings and display a lower belief in their research ability than male doctoral students (p. 109). Going further, there has been a dearth of literature that focuses on class, race, and place, and how these identities influence women's feelings of being academic imposters. An updated examination of the imposter phenomenon, whether it manifests differently across distinct lenses of intersectionality, and how it relates to identity negotiation, provides relevant data that can be useful in identity and student development research. Much of the focus of previous imposter phenomenon research has been quantitative, largely ignoring the lived experiences of individuals (Bernard et al 2002; Oriel, Plane and Mundt 2004; Craddock et al. 2011).

Focusing on first generation female students at the *graduate* level is also important in several ways. Primarily, most of the research regarding first generation college students focuses on the undergraduate experience, leaving a fairly large gap in the literature involving first generation graduate students. In addition, graduate students feel increased pressure to become an "academic" or a "professional," which may result in additional conflict related to identity. I know I have felt more pressure to utilize my graduate experience as a professional in the workplace, and at times the pressure has been difficult to handle and left me confused as to which identity I should put forward.

Professional socialization is a process that "prepares the graduate student for the academic world and its expectations, as well as the professional role and its associated values and culture" (Gardner and Barnes 2007:7). Several processes of socialization take place at the same time: socialization to the role of graduate student, socialization to the

academic life and the profession, and socialization to a specific discipline or field (Austin 2002:96; Polson 2003). The socialization process of graduate students is "neither color-blind nor gender-blind" (Gardner 2008:128). According to qualitative data from Margolis and Romero's (1993) study, graduate school curriculum produces professional sociologists but also reproduces gender, race, and other forms of inequality (p. 2).

Over the years, academic culture and the socialization that comes with it reflects the experiences of men; specifically, older, white men, who still continue to be the majority of full professors and administrators (Gardner 2008; Walker 1998). Thus, the diverse experiences of students who "do not fit the mold of graduate education are explainable in that these students' socialization experience is not entirely normative due to differences in their underrepresented status" (Gardner 2008:128). Despite the progress that has been made with respect to gender and racial equality, colleges and universities "continue to maintain environments that discourage participation by women and students of color" (Ellis 2001:42).

Research has shown that numerous first generation professional scholars from working-class backgrounds report long-lasting identity conflicts, still feeling like outsiders and imposters in academia many years later (Jones 1998; Lawler 1999). Furthermore, the academic experiences for faculty of color are often represented in terms of "multiple lenses of marginalities" (Trotman 2009:80). According to Turner (2002), women of color who are graduate students or faculty members must "leave themselves, who they are, at the door of graduate education in order to succeed" (pg. 89).

First generation college students in graduate school face the reality of having to construct a professional or academic identity, one that may differ greatly from their

previous experiences of identity. Gardner (2008) notes that "graduate students'

individual demographic characteristics (race, gender, class, place) play an influential role

in their preparation for the degree program and their experience in it" (p.127).

Terms and Definitions

There are a few terms and concepts integral to this study. First, the term "first

generation college student" will be defined and tied to the current literature. Second, the

variables of identity negotiation will be identified and their intersection discussed.

Lastly, the imposter phenomenon will be defined with indications of how it fits within the

framework of the research.

First Generation College Student

First generation college students are most often defined as those whose parents

did not receive any formal education beyond a high school diploma (Pascarella et al.

2004). Some first generation definitions also include students with one or both parents

having some postsecondary education, but neither obtaining a degree, or those with

parents who attained no more than a vocational certificate or associate degree (Horn and

Nunez 2000). For the purposes of this study, first generation college students are defined

as those with neither parent having attended a college or university.

Literature shows that when compared to their peers, first generation college

students are at a pronounced disadvantage regarding basic knowledge about the higher

education process, high school academic preparation, degree expectations and plans, as

well as socioeconomic status and support (Pascarella et al. 2004; Rood 2009; Orbe 2008).

Evidence also reveals that first generation college students have a more difficult

transition from high school to college than their peers, are less likely to stay in college

and graduate (Pascarella et al. 2004; Orbe 2008; Rood 2009), and experience increased feelings of alienation and inadequacy (Aries and Seider 2005; Stewart and Ostrove 1993).

First generation students often encounter obstacles because their parents do not possess the knowledge or ability to help them navigate college life. Research has shown that first generation college students display a lack of academic preparation, a lack of academic expectations, and a deficit in personal skills and social supports when compared to their peers (Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco 2005; Terenzini et al. 1996; Tym, McMillion, Barone and Webster 2004). First generation college students report more difficulties re-negotiating relationships with parents and friends at home who may not support or who may even vigorously contest their educational goals (Aries and Seider 2005; Tym et al. 2004). In some ways, first-generation college students may feel forced to show loyalty to their friends and families, feeling obligated and betrayed at the same time (Aries and Seider 2005). Baxter and Britton (2001) suggest that the changes first generation students experience have "significant effects on their sense of self, as well as on relations with friends and colleagues who still inhabit the 'old' world" (p. 93).

Research has emphasized the importance of recognizing class, race, gender, and place as systems of domination or oppression, meaning that some people are disadvantaged by these systems, while some are privileged at the expense of others (Fuller 2004; Collins 1998, 2000). Ostrove and Cole (2003) highlight the significance of studying these systems; providing evidence of how social identities are experienced in combination with each other, termed "intersectionality" (p. 681). Thus, an examination of class, race, gender, and place is critical in understanding how graduate students negotiate multiple social identities.

Class

When examining the effects of socioeconomic status on first generation student identity, going to college and "breaking away" from family can be a painful and difficult situation; first generation college students are thrust into a "class limbo" where they are required to "straddle different cultures" (Frye et al. 2005:2). These students must renegotiate their identities based on new experiences and dramatic changes in context. Consequently, because of the identity negotiation involved in assimilating to the middle class academic world, specific problems arise for poor to working class first generation students.

Baxter and Britton (2001) describe lower income students who go on to higher education as being "on a trajectory of class mobility, which is experienced as a painful dislocation between an old and newly developing habitus, which are ranked hierarchically and carry connotations of inferiority and superiority" (p. 99). Mack (2006) notes the importance of viewing class identity as a "multiply conflicted development process" (p. 59). It is also important to note that often differences between racial-ethnic groups may be contributed to social class disparities instead of actual group differences in culture (Fuller 2004).

In order to deal with the difficulty of not being accepted at home or in college, first-generation college students often report using specific coping strategies or defense mechanisms (Granfield 1991; Aries and Seider 2005). Frequently, students employ "code switching," which involves acting one way at home and an entirely different way at college to fit in at both places (Aries and Seider 2005). Many also confess that they try to "pass" as middle or upper-class students by not divulging background information and

embracing the culture of their fellow students (Granfield 1991; Aries and Seider 2005). Mack (2006) writes that the working class student's struggle to "pass" can lead to living in fear of being unmasked as undeserving (p. 56).

Jones (2003) points out that "growing up working class can produce an insidious sense of inferiority as members learn their lower-ranked position through cultural images, class stereotypes, and interactions with teachers and other authorities" (p. 804). She reiterates that members of the working class who experience upward class mobility may face "conflicting class loyalties" and feel "nowhere at home" (Jones 2003:804). Some first generation working-class college students who adopt middle or upper-class values may feel like the new culture is their "true" identity, while fighting feelings of identity conflict (Lawler 1999). First-generation students may eventually cut themselves off completely from their working-class family, even avoiding friends or others that remind them of their previous identity (Lawler 1999).

Although class analysis alone is very useful in studying first generation college students, it would be difficult to truly understand identity negotiation without considering the intersection of race, class, gender and place. Class stratification intersects with race, gender, and place stratification, resulting in people situated in multiple relations of power that influence life chances, lifestyle, group affiliations, and sense of self (Collins 2000). Thus, the experience of social class cannot be meaningfully understood outside of the context of race, gender, place, or other social identities with which class interacts (Ostrove and Cole 2003).

Race

Research points out that specific racial groups, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, are less likely to attend college and graduate (Ishitani 2006; Dennis, Phinney and Chuateco 2005; Kao and Thompson 2003). Furthermore, students with minority racial status who are also the first generation to attend college may be negatively affected by additional stressors beyond what college students normally face, such as cultural expectations to fulfill family obligations and duties (Phinney and Haas 2003), racism and discrimination, cultural insensitivity, and educational hegemony (Cokley et al. 2013, Goodman and West-Olatunji 2010). These types of stressors can lead to a lack of belonging and may leave the student feeling like an outsider.

There are a few published studies regarding racial minority students who experience imposter feelings. In Caselman's (2003) study, Japanese students reported higher impostor scores than American students. Cokley et al. (2013) found that African-Americans reported higher minority status stress than Asian Americans and Latino/a Americans, while Asian Americans reported higher impostor feelings, despite higher academic achievement. Craddock et al. (2011) found that participants' racial identity increased their imposter feelings. However, Ewing et al. (1996) indicated African American graduate students experienced imposter feelings that were influenced more by worldview and academic self-concept than racial identity.

According to the findings of Ellis (2001), race is a significant factor in the graduate student experience influencing socialization, satisfaction level, and commitment to degree completion. Research has also shown that being a female minority student has a significant impact on students. Bassett (1990) states "the minority female in higher education, regardless of her qualifications, is often perceived as a 'token'; at times she

may find herself disregarded or patronized, or she may meet open hostility" (p. 239). Saenz (1994) indicates that a token status often causes minority students to feel responsible for positively representing their group at all times, which for females, leads to increased self-consciousness and can result in performance deficits.

The few studies that have been published also indicate that women of color may be more intensely affected by impostor feelings because of a double or triple minority status (Clance and Imes 1978; Clance, Dingman, Reviere, and Stober 1995), which can make the entire graduate school experience more difficult to navigate. Interestingly, Clance (1985) suggests that experiencing imposter feelings may actually help women of color feel less differentiated from their family and community; in this sense, feeling like a fraud keeps them humble and serves to downplay their academic achievements. Clance (1985) goes on to say that, for women of color, rejection or separation from community may also be a factor in the origin or continuation of imposter feelings.

Gender

Fuller (2004) stresses the importance of examining differences among women to create a more complete and accurate picture of women in society, to hear from less privileged women to expand people's views and meaning of gender. However, there is a tendency to universalize the experiences and characteristics of all women, which affects how others see women and how women see themselves (Fuller 2004). For many years, women of color have disputed the "hegemony of feminisms constructed primarily around the lives of white middle-class women" (Zinn and Dill 1996:321). Since the late 1960's, there has been widespread criticism of the way white feminists categorize the terms women and gender as "unitary and homogeneous, reflecting the common essence of all

women" (McCall 2005:1776; Collins 2000; Zinn and Dill 1996). These critiques surfaced primarily because of the exclusion of women of color and their experiences from the feminist body of knowledge (Zinn and Dill 1996; Abes et al. 2007; McCann and Kim 2002).

Because women's experiences are unique, there is no common meaning or significance which captures the lived experiences of all women; similarly, there is no common meaning or significance associated with the experiences of women based on the categories of race, social class, or place (Abes et al. 2007). It is imperative to acknowledge that women's lives are affected by their location in multiple socially constructed dimensions; thus, racial-ethnic and social class differences among women should not be ignored (Fuller 2004:10; Zinn and Dill 1996). Intersectionality provides a way to examine similarities and differences within each facet of identity as it is "influenced by the simultaneous experience of the other dimensions" (Abes et al. 2007:2; McCann and Kim 2002). By recognizing women's individual lived experiences, we can acknowledge the many ways women negotiate their identity.

Differences between middle and working-class women's backgrounds have often been identified in the literature. Fuller (2004) discusses familial differences; specifically that women of color and working-class women feel more loyalty and obligation to their relatives. She notes that working-class women are expected to provide support for both their family of origin and their current family, while middle-class women are allowed to distance themselves from their family of origin (p. 17). This means that middle-class women are expected to be good mothers and wives, while working-class women are expected to be good mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, cousins, on down the line. Fuller

(2004) goes on to discuss how working class female college students go home often to help with a family emergency, while their working-class brothers are left to focus exclusively on their college life (p. 17).

Berg and Ferber (1983) mention that the structure of incentives, relationships, and rewards differs for males and females, both during and after graduate school. This study found that women are viewed as less dedicated and less promising by faculty (Berg and Ferber 1983:631). More recently, Hart (2006) notes that "academe is entrenched in the power of patriarchy...and although women are more prevalent in higher education, academic culture has changed very little" (p.41). Based on her findings, Hart (2006) suggests that women are not prevalent in higher education discourse; specifically, the literature rarely focuses on the intersection of gender with race, class, or other aspects of women's lives.

Place

Rurality is utilized in this study primarily as a concept of place and reflects Midwestern experience and cultural context in relationship to gender and class. Research has established that rural spaces are gendered; men and women do not hold the same positions or engage in the same kinds of tasks in rural areas (Bryant and Pini 2009; Pini 2006, 2007). Little and Panelli (2003) argued that rurality itself influenced women's involvement in employment, through practical obstacles such as lack of child care as well as social and cultural expectations surrounding women's roles (p. 284). Studies have reinforced how traditional ideas of femininity, particularly women's roles as mothers, central to the dominant cultural constructions of rurality, served to restrict women's opportunities within the rural labor market (Little and Panelli 2003; Little 1999). Rural

women were seen first as mothers, and their paid work and career goals were expected to take a secondary role (Little and Panelli 2003).

Although rural areas are generally viewed by most through the myth of the "rural idyll," a positive and wholesome place for families to live, the reality is that rural environments may be "increasingly inhospitable" to family life (Little 1999:439; Wells 2002:236). Little (1999) emphasized that the "rural idyll" has worked to negate variety and "simplify our understanding of power relations within rural society and the contestation of the reality and representation of rural culture" (p. 440). Power relations in rural areas refer to a gendered division of labor and long-standing patriarchal traditions and role expectations. Wells (2002) points out that the restructuring of the economy has decreased economic opportunities for rural families. However, even though rural families have much difficulty "making ends meet," they are less likely to use welfare programs than the urban poor, and are more likely to stop using the programs even when they are eligible (Wells 2002:236).

Research shows how rural spaces are both gendered and classed; they are constructed and reconstructed through "daily interactions, the nature of one's work, volunteer activities, leisure choices and memories" (Bryant and Pini 2009:55). Much of the work involving rural gender studies has served to signify the "invisibility and disadvantage" of women in rural areas (Bryant and Pini 2009:55; Little and Panelli 2003). This invisibility and disadvantage is illustrated by the gendered division of labor on farms; the exclusion or marginalization of girls and women from important agricultural resources, information, and farm management; the frequency of discourses of

communitarianism, and the hegemony of traditional gender discourses in rural environments (Bryant and Pini 2009; Leckie 1996).

In Wells' (2002) study of rural women, a strong ethic of self-sufficiency and hard work was reported by those in the middle class, upper and lower income working class, and poor. However, the way women expressed this ethic differed by social class. The middle-class rural women appeared to be "insulated" from the financial insecurities reported by the women in other classes; they did not focus on the difficulty in achieving economic stability, but on the good choices in their lives (Wells 2002:249). The upper-income working-class women reported that a high standard of living is possible, but only by "extraordinary effort," including going to college (Wells 2002:249). The lower-income working class women reported that working hard does not always equal financial security, and the majority had experienced poverty (Wells 2002:250). The poor women in this study compared their current situation in the context of past experience: some were satisfied while others wanted to do better, but most realized the severe financial reality present in the rural labor market (Wells 2002:250).

The findings from Wells' (2002) study support rural women's value of economic self-sufficiency (agrarian ideal), despite limited economic opportunity and lack of supportive infrastructure, especially for those in the working and poor classes. This research also highlights significant class differences in rural areas, where middle class women did not experience the stressors of those in the working and poor classes.

Collins (2000) emphasizes the belief that place, space, and territory link gendered notions of family with constructs of race and class. Yuval-Davis (1997:1) also states that "constructed notions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of manhood and

womanhood," which intersect with race and class to produce social location. The concept of place represents both a context for action and a source of identity, containing place-specific ideologies and social practices of gender, class and race (Jackson and Penrose 1993). According to Agnew and Duncan, (1989) place is an identity which serves to mediate between everyday lives of individuals and the institutions which constrain and enable those lives (Jackson and Penrose 1993:13).

The ways in which students negotiate multiple identities are complex and varied. Patton and Simmons (2008) found that the participants in their study experienced times in which three identities were present, and at least two of the three (if not all three) converged for them in diverse experiences (p. 206). Quintana and Herrara (2003) note that "the combination of three cultural lenses may lead to a triple consciousness of self, in which powerful messages and images of self are internalized based on who measures their souls" (p. 271). Patton and Simmons (2008) point out that students who are oppressed in more than one area often feel forced to select which identity they will recognize above all others, thus placing students in an "either-or" versus "both-all" dilemma (p. 198).

According to Stryker (2008), identities are ordered in a salience hierarchy (p.20). Identity salience is "the likelihood that a given identity will be invoked or called into play in a variety of situations" (Stryker 2008:20). Studies have shown that when students move from home to the academic environment, they often form relationships in which they can preserve previous identities shaped by multiple identity dimensions, such as class, race/ethnicity, gender, and place (Stryker 2008; Abes et al. 2007). However, the salience of each identity dimension is ever-changing, depending upon contextual

influences, lived experiences and attached meanings (Jones and McEwen 2000). As a result, students may identify one dimension of their identity as particularly salient, not fully understanding how multiple identities are continually shaped at the intersections of race, class, gender and place (Abes et al. 2007). Thus, it is a challenge to conduct intersectional research that truly captures the complexity of multiple identities.

Imposter Phenomenon

Differences involving race, class, gender, and/or place can often lead to an imposter phenomenon, where students feel they are the "wrong type" and often sabotage themselves rather than risk being seen as an imposter (Clance 1985; Clance and Imes 1978, Clance and O'Toole 1988; Mack 2006:56). These so called "imposters" may display generalized anxiety, perfectionism, lack of self-confidence, depression, frustration due to their inability to meet their own standards of achievement, low self-esteem, tendency to excessively worry about mistakes, and to rebuff evidence of their success (Clance and Imes, 1978; Bernard et al. 2002; Thompson, Foreman, and Martin 2000; Ferrari 2005).

Bernard et al. (2002) found that college students who scored high on the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (Clance 1985) were prone to feelings of depression and anxiety, while Ross and Krukowski (2003) suggested the imposter phenomenon was also associated with depression, as well as maladaptive personality. Additional studies suggest that imposter feelings are connected to self-handicapping behaviors, such as lack of effort and procrastination (Want and Kleitman 2006; Cowman and Ferrari 2002; Ross et al. 2001). According to these studies, imposters will use self-handicapping behaviors to avoid being evaluated and to reduce the chance that they will be revealed as a fraud.

Imposters also perceive that their success is not a result of talent or ability, but luck or error (Ferrari 2005; Clance 1985).

As previously stated, most studies suggest that women are more adversely affected by imposter fears than men (Kumar and Jagacinski 2006; Mack 2006; Clance and O'Toole 1988). Clance and O'Toole (1988) point out that "women are more likely to be limited, and limited more powerfully than men by the imposter phenomenon" (p. 53). Clance et al. (1995) suggested that societal values and expectations related to gender roles contribute to women's feelings of phoniness and fraudulence in higher education. It is hard for a woman to embody the masculine roles necessary for success without feeling deceptive or fraudulent. Research indicates the presence of imposter phenomenon characteristics is influenced by societal forces associated with gender roles. Craddock et al. (2011) notes that imposter feelings are multiplied when women are successful in environments where society tells them they do not belong, such as male-dominated fields (p.432). Furthermore, imposter feelings affect women of color more intensely because of a double or triple minority status (Clance et al. 1995; Cokley et al. 2013), that has its own cultural expectations and racial group affiliation (Bell 1989).

The imposter phenomenon was originally identified in 1978 to describe high achieving women who reported feeling like "frauds" (Clance and Imes 1978). People with imposter phenomenon characteristics identify with the feeling of being an "imposter," second guessing their accomplishments (Kumar and Jagacinski 2006, Clance 1985; Clance and O'Toole 1988; Clance and Imes 1978). These "imposters" often fear that others will find out that they actually lack ability (Kumar and Jagacinski 2006; Mack 2006). In addition, experienced successes neither decrease impostors' fraudulent feelings

nor increase belief in their own ability (Ferrari 2005). This in turn leads to a cycle of self-doubt for the imposter that is only temporarily relieved by personal achievements (Clance and O'Toole 1988; Kumar and Jagacinksi 2006; Ferrari 2005).

The imposter phenomenon relates to an individual's "feelings of phoniness" and a "fear that their true lack of ability will be discovered" (Kumar and Jagacinski 2006:148). In this sense, female first generation graduate students may feel they are "frauds" and the "wrong type" of student based on race, class, gender, place, or other categories of difference. For the purposes of this study, attention will be placed on whether the imposter phenomenon manifests differently across the intersections of race, class, gender, and place; examining the gradations of occurrence for first generation graduate students and how it relates to individual identity negotiation.

Order of Text

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework discusses the overarching theory for this study, intersectionality, as well as the meaning of identity and previous approaches to the study of identity.

Chapter Three: Methodology provides an overview of qualitative methods, including autoethnography and in-depth interviewing, as well as the quantitative method of surveying. Sampling procedures are outlined, as well as qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four: Research Population provides an overview of the demographics of both the online survey population and the interview respondents.

Chapter Five: Quantitative Analysis discusses the statistical findings from the Clance IP scale (CIPS) online survey as well as the survey administered to interview respondents.

Chapter Six: What Do They Know That I Don't Know presents the qualitative findings related to research question 1, constructing identity across race, class, gender and place and the repercussions within various contexts.

Chapter Seven: The Imposter Phenomenon presents the qualitative findings in response to research question 3, repercussions to the self, whether and what extent the imposter phenomenon manifests across race, class and gender.

Chapter Eight: Straddling Two Worlds presents the final qualitative findings in response to research question 4, adaptation, focusing on how female first generation graduate students negotiate identity in order to adapt to home and academia, with implications for success.

Chapter Nine: Discussion summarizes the findings presented in Chapters 5-8 and also includes limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

Identity

This research focuses on how female graduate students negotiate their identity using an intersectional approach. But what exactly constitutes 'identity' and how is it negotiated? There are many ways researchers and sociologists describe identity, but one of the easiest ways to define it is how we view ourselves in relation to the world. Yuval-Davis (2006) states that identities are "individual and collective narratives that answer the question 'who am/are I/we?'" (p. 197). According to the literature, identity is generally viewed as an individual's "personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups, such as race, class, gender, and the ways one expresses that relationship" (Torres, Jones, and Renn 2009:577).

Gee (2000) points out that identity is the "kind of person" one is recognized as "being" at a given time and place; identity is often ambiguous or unstable, changing from moment to moment and context to context (p. 99). Gee (2000) goes on to say that we all have multiple identities which reflect societal roles, but we also have a core identity that holds steady across contexts. I like this description of identity because it emphasizes the fact that identity is fluid, but also that a certain part of who we are remains constant.

Sociologists most often describe the process of creating and negotiating identity from a constructionist perspective. Classical theorists Cooley, Mead, and Weber recognized social constructionism as a way to examine relationships among race, class, and gender identities. To say that identity is 'socially constructed,' is to say that who we

are and how we feel about our own social group and others is 'constructed through interactions with the broader social context in which dominant values dictate norms and expectations' (Torres et al. 2009:577). According to researchers, the broader social context can include major institutions such as education and work, as well as systems of power and inequality such as race, class and gender (Abes et al. 2007; Torres et al. 2009).

Frable (1997) supports this by stating that race/ethnic, class and gender identities are "fluid, multidimensional, personalized social constructions that reflect individual's current context and socio-historical cohort" (p. 139). People may exercise agency in creating their own identities; however, the meanings are difficult to accurately determine because identities are ever changing due to social, political, historical and cultural forces (Walker 1998; Omi and Winant 1994). According to Walker (1998), "the patterning of academic identities by gender, class, and race as sites of struggle and oppression are then not absolute, fixed and predetermined, and structures neither seamless nor monolithic" (pg.336)

Cerulo (1997) points out that the variation within identity categories (women, African Americans, working class) is just as important as the variation between identity categories (p. 391). Subsequently, the variations at the intersections of race, class, gender and place, which include different group identities and related stereotypes, have considerable bearing on individual attitude and behavior (Pittinsky 1999).

Cote (2005) notes that particular group membership becomes the lens for individuals to belong to society, providing a common understanding which causes the group membership to become the most "salient, if not the only, identity of members" (p. 139). As mentioned previously, Stryker (2008) believes that identity is ordered in a

"salience hierarchy," defined as the likelihood that an identity will be invoked in a variety of situations (p. 20). For individuals navigating multiple identities, this kind of saliency may not exist; thus the need for "dynamic, shifting and multiplex constructions of intersectionality" (Yuval-Davis 2006:195).

Intersectionality

Experiences of identity negotiation involve the intersection of class, race, gender and place; therefore, intersectionality is utilized as a theoretical framework guiding this research. Intersectionality refers to "the interaction between gender, race, class, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power " (Davis 2008:68). Collins (2000) indicates that intersectionality opposes the examination of gender, race, class, and place as "separate systems of oppression," and instead advocates the investigation of how these systems "mutually construct one another" (p.63).

The term "intersectionality" originated by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), was initially used as a "critique of difference" (Davis 2008:68) to highlight experiences of women of color that both feminist and anti-racist discourse were not addressing, and to avoid the many problems involved in identity politics (Jordan-Zachery 2007; Yuval-Davis 2006). Crenshaw (1989) implied that existing theory needed to show how gender and race interacted to shape the "multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences" (139).

Intersectionality as a framework for studying identity emerged from critical legal studies and research conducted by women of color (Torres et al. 2009). The goal was to respond to the lack of representation of their experiences in the literature, while at the

same time advancing the "lived experiences of marginalized individuals" (Torres et al. 2009:588). Researchers have used intersectionality theory in traditional and nontraditional ways to analyze and understand women's multiple identities and the challenges that women face. Intersectionality calls on us to consider women as whole beings; to recognize that not all women experience their womanhood in the same ways (Rockquemore 2002).

According to Hancock (2007) "intersectionality" refers to *both* a normative theoretical argument *and* an approach to conducting empirical research that emphasizes the interaction of categories of difference (p. 63). Over the past 20 years, intersectionality has emerged as a legitimate research paradigm, characterized by its commitment to practical application; the unique ways in which it "conceptualizes the constitution of, relationship between, and multi-level analysis of categories of difference" (Hancock 2007:71). Thus, intersectionality as a theoretical approach to conducting research provides answers to many questions left unanswered by the more common unitary or multiple approaches. It will be especially useful in understanding how female first generation graduate students experience identity at the intersections of race, class, gender and place.

The use of intersectional paradigms also helps explain how social structure and culture is organized amid the multiple intricacies of race, class, gender, and place. Intersectionality expands the investigative lens to include both multiple identities and larger social structures of power and inequality (Torres et al. 2009). Collins (2000) emphasizes intersectionality as a paradigm shift; instead of viewing separate systems of oppression, such as gender, and then adding in other variables such as race and class,

these oppressive systems interlock as part of an "overarching matrix of domination" (p. 218). The resulting "matrix of domination" interweaves structures of domination with structures of privilege, resulting in some people being disadvantaged by these systems, while others are privileged at their expense (Collins 2000:218; Fuller 2004).

In this study, intersectionality provides a useful way to examine both oppressed and privileged identities of female first generation graduate students, while at the same time recognizing the likelihood that they may experience mutual identities (Torres et al. 2009; Collins 2000; Fuller 2004).

Social location refers to the "relative amount of privilege and oppression that individuals possess on the basis of specific identity constructs, such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and faith" (Hulko 2009:48). Intersectionality has been used to describe the intertwining of identity categories that shape an individual, the power differences that result from these formations, and the need to view individuals holistically rather than from a specific thread of identity (Hulko 2009; Collins 2000; Fuller 2004).

Azmitia, Syed, and Radmacher (2008) point out that researchers utilizing an intersectional approach "reject a hierarchical, or additive, approach to social identities; rather, they emphasize how social identities intersect to create unique positions within society; because these identities all work together to shape experiences, they cannot be understood in isolation" (p.12)**.** Research using an intersectional framework proposes that certain ideas and practices appear repeatedly across multiple systems of oppression and serve as focal points or privileged social locations for these intersecting systems (Collins 1998:63).

For example, although women of color and white female first generation college students may experience similar gender and class-related challenges; their experiences will be unique because their race/ethnicity puts them in either a subordinate or dominant position at the university and in society. First generation female students of color may potentially experience at least three intersecting systems of oppression (gender, class, and race), while white female first generation students may potentially experience at least two systems of oppression (gender and class). It is integral to take into account cultural variation which occurs at all variables; although there may be some universal experiences and challenges, neither white women nor women of color experience gender, race, or class in the same way.

The imposter phenomenon is a concept that clearly fits within the intersectional framework of this study. As stated previously, the imposter phenomenon relates to an individual's "feelings of phoniness" and a "fear that their true lack of ability will be discovered" (Kumar and Jagacinski 2006:148). In this sense, first generation college students may feel they are "frauds" and the "wrong type" of student based on race, class, gender, or other categories of difference.

Torres et al. (2009) emphasize that intersectionality provides a framework for new approaches to understanding and researching identity and student identity development (p.588). Aronson (2008) points out that there is a need for research on the intersections between racial and class background and postsecondary education. Other research studies recommend comparing identities and exploring differences across race, gender, and class (Phinney 2008).

Much of the earlier research studied social identities independently, as separate units of analysis (Jones and McEwen 2000; Abes et al. 2007). The predominant view in the area of identity studies involved a "single location along a specific dimension, defined by a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories" (Torres et al. 2009:586). As a result, developmental theories that focused on specific racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual identity were consistently put forward in the literature (Torres et al. 2009; Abes et al. 2007).

Moreover, specific developmental theories were seldom brought together in a way that highlighted the intersection of multiple identities, and if they were, most resulted in additive rather than integrative approaches (Bowleg 2008; Torres et al. 2009; Abes et al. 2007). Only a small amount of research and few contemporary theories, such as the model of multiple dimensions of identity (Jones and McEwen 2000), cut across multiple identities and examined more than one of these developmental domains (King and Baxter-Magolda 2005; Abes et al. 2007; Phinney 2008). Thus, the proposed study responds to a recognized need for multiple identity research using an intersectional approach.

Qualitative studies such as the one conducted by Azmitia et al. (2008) provide an important starting point for research involving multiple identities. Through the use of longitudinal interviews of college students, Azmitia et al. (2008) presented examples of the interactive effects of group identities (specifically race, gender, and class) combined with personal identities. Results indicated that for some students, their various identities became more integrated over time as they became more aware of the way in which the sum of these identities influenced their lives; but for other students, it was far more

difficult to articulate the intersection of their identities (Azmitia et al. 2008). According to the authors, the unevenness of the sample was due to the wide variety of personal and contextual experiences which influenced student identity, as well as the perceived salience of certain identities over others. Additionally, Cooper's (1999) *Multiple Worlds Model* describes the identity negotiation of salient personal contexts or 'worlds,' including family, peers, schools and communities, which function as both resources and challenges. In this sense, intersectionality provides a way to more fully integrate individuals' multiple, intersecting 'worlds.'

Torres et al. (2009) stress that although studies of specific populations in isolated domains have increased knowledge of identity development, some scholars have "begun to put the pieces back together to consider the whole student again, in all of his or her complex and intersecting identities" (p.590). Intersectionality as a theoretical framework for studying identity offers a way to more completely reveal the whole person in context, while also paying attention to the structures of inequality that exert powerful influences on the constructions of both privileged and oppressed identities (Torres et al. 2009).

In the following chapter, I discuss the research methodology based on the theory of intersectionality, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, data collection and analysis.

Chapter Three

Methodology

It is challenging but necessary to propose a research design that encompasses the underlying forces and complexities of multiple and intersecting identities. Intersectional research and analysis involves both "working *at* the intersections and *about* the intersections" (Jones 2009:289). This means that the research methods should focus on lived experiences, explore identity as being shaped by interacting systems of power and privilege, and include a larger purpose of social change (Collins 2000; Jones 2009).

Procedures

Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants in this study. As stated previously, I met the criteria of being a female first generation college graduate student, thus became a full participant in this study. I recruited additional participants by utilizing available data in the form of enrolled female graduate student e-mail addresses. In order to reach as many female graduate students as possible, I e-mailed the QuestionPro survey (Clance IP Scale) link to all current female students, requesting participation in my dissertation research along with a brief explanation of it. The IRB approved human subjects consent form and description/purpose of my research was provided in the introduction to the online survey.

The e-mail also contained specific information requesting first generation college student participation in a face to face interview. Participants were asked to contact me if they were a first generation college student interested in participating in an interview to further explore this topic. I was contacted by 31 students who were interested in

participating in an interview; however, 8 of these students did not meet the criteria of being first generation, two of the students lived at a distance that prevented a face to face interview from taking place, and one student backed out because of schedule conflicts. As a result, 21 first generation female graduate students participated in in-depth interviews. I also provided a monetary incentive of $25 to each participant for their time.

I should note that I was neither selective nor biased in any way during the process of recruiting interview participants. Every female graduate student who met the criteria of being a first generation student and who was able to participate in the time frame allowed was interviewed. I did not discriminate based on age, program of study, race/ethnicity, or other category; thus demographics of the respondents were diverse. The sample included female graduate students ranging in age from 23 to 57, enrolled in various programs such as Plant Science, Nursing, Education, Chemistry, Nutrition; a racial/ethnic composition of White, Native American, Asian, and 2 or more races; and socioeconomic status ranges from poor, working, and middle class backgrounds.

Qualitative Methods

Autoethnography

To address my own subjectivity, as well as the challenges and complexities of intersectionality, I chose to utilize autoethnography as part of my methodology. I would rather recognize and embrace my own experience as a female first generation graduate student than fail to acknowledge it. Autoethnography is defined as "an autobiographical genre of research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner 2000:739). This method is not meant to provide an opportunity to give an autobiographical account or life story, but to identify, compare,

and connect my experiences with other participants. Spry (2001) states that autoethnography is "a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts....transforming the authorial "I" to the existential "we" (p. 710-11).

Autoethnographic work involves specific characteristics and criteria, including: 1) participation as reciprocity; 2) partiality and reflexivity as strategies for dialogue; 3) dialogues as a space for debate and negotiation; 4) personal narrative and storytelling as an obligation to critique; 5) evocation and emotion as incitements to action; and 6) engaged embodiment as a condition for change (Jones 2009:290). Autoethnography fits well with intersectional research as a methodological approach that allows the "exploration of multiple and intersecting identities" (Jones 2009:290).

Through autoethnography, stories of identity negotiation "inspire readers to reflect critically upon their own life experience, constructions of self, and interactions with others within sociohistorical contexts" (Spry 2001:711) while promoting awareness and change in society. Autoethnography provides a new avenue of research that goes against traditional objective methods of researcher-participant, allowing me to acknowledge and analyze my personal experiences in order to understand cultural experiences.

More specifically, I participated in a reciprocal fashion with each interview respondent, engaging in a dialogue that included joint discussion and mutual opportunity for sharing stories and experiences. The use of autoethnography during the interviews fostered emotional responses and interactions with many respondents, including myself, reflecting on past experiences and identifying changes for the future. I continually focused on remaining true to the autoethnographic principles mentioned above, which

allowed for full exploration of multiple identities and a deep awareness of societal issues and concerns. I truly believe this dissertation would not be as personally meaningful or as professionally rich in the absence of autoethnography.

In-depth Interviewing

For this study, in-depth semi-structured active interviewing was the method that best fit with the specific criteria and characteristics of autoethnography, as well as the framework of the research questions. According to Stanfield (2011), the in-depth interview is a "contexualized social product" that tells us about the ways in which social constructions, such as race or gender, "shapes our communication with each other and how we tell our stories" (p. 74) and results in a "social product that interviewer and interviewee work together to co-create" (Stanfield 2011:88). Through this process, qualitative data is collected in the form of participant narratives and dialogic conversations, capturing each participant's sense of self and social location (Jones 2009:291).

With respect to the interview process, I did not want to operate from a structured questionnaire, but instead wanted to keep the interview as open as possible in order to go wherever the interviewee took me. Initially, I planned on utilizing unstructured in-depth interviewing by asking participants to respond to one major question, "Describe who you are as a person." After meeting with my committee and doing some thinking about the process, I realized that having the interview this unstructured might backfire in the long run. I felt I needed something more, a protocol that would serve as a guide, ensuring that I covered the areas that were most important. I decided to keep the interviews semi-structured; guided by an intersectional framework which included activating responses to

three main questions related to identity, as well as the use of multiple probes to clarify

concepts, elicit detail, and extend the narrative (Appendix A).   The creation of an

interview protocol assisted me in more completely meeting IRB guidelines, and proved

more beneficial to conducting analysis.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data collection and analysis occurred in two phases over the course of

9 months. The first phase involved the collection of the data. Qualitative data was

collected in the form of face to face interviews. Twenty in-depth semi-structured

participant interviews, approximately two hours in length, were conducted from February

to April 2013.

It is important to verify the integrity of qualitative data by making efforts to

interpret implicit data. It is not enough to tell a story; the story must be grounded in

trustworthiness (Jones 2009). This process included face validity and the integrity of

reliability as demonstrated in patterns identified through the analytical process. Member-

checking was also part of the continual process, which involved relaying material to

respondents for verification, both during the interviews and after transcription.

In line with autoethnography, consistent reflection on my position helped ensure

that the interconnections of self and others were not replaced by self-indulgent

introspection (Jones, Torres, and Arminio 2006). My goal was not to tell my life story,

but to relate my experiences to the experiences of other female first generation graduate

students.

Because I had not used autoethnography as method before, I really had no idea

what to do or how to do it. I began by thinking about my own life experiences and jotting

them down as personal notes. Things actually started clicking during the face to face

interviews, when I related personal experiences or thoughts in response to questions or

reactions from the interviewees. I acknowledged not only what was said, but how it was

said, including mutual reactions to questions and responses, as well as the process itself.

It was at this time that I felt I was utilizing autoethnography, engaging with the

participant in a reciprocal fashion by reflecting on lived experiences and connecting them

with sociocultural contexts. Autoethnography involves transforming data through

description, analysis, and interpretation (Jones 2009). I included my responses by

transcribing them from the interviews along with the participants' responses. Through

the use of autoethnography, the process of identity negotiation was more deeply revealed.

The interviews were audio recorded using the irecorder application via an ipad.

The recordings and ipad were in my possession only throughout the research process. I

transcribed each interview word for word without assistance from another person or

technology. Although this was extremely time-consuming, it allowed me to really get to

know the data, which made it easier to code and analyze for themes. Once I had

transcribed the interview, the transcript was provided to each interview participant for

cross-checking and verification. No changes were made to the interview data. In

keeping with ethical principles of confidentiality; the real names of participants were not

used in this study.

Coding

The second phase involved interpretation and analysis of the qualitative data. The

in-depth interview provided the platform for all participants to impart qualitative data,

which was then coded and analyzed to reflect conceptual themes, as well as gradations of the imposter phenomenon across the intersections or race, class, gender and place.

In qualitative research, a code is usually a "word or phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana 2008:3). The process of coding involves "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, minimizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz 2006:42), which is necessary to transform large amounts of data into a manageable format for analysis and evaluation. In this study, coding data is very useful in examining how interview participants' view themselves; whether and how they manage "different senses of self" (Burck 2005:252).

There are many different ways to analyze and code qualitative data. Open coding is the initial coding process which involves sifting through the data and labeling or coding words and phrases (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Bogdan and Biklen 2007). Axial coding is an analytic process that involves creating themes or categories by grouping the codes or labels that were given to the words and phrases (Bogdan and Biklen 2007). I utilized both open and axial coding to examine the raw interview data, interpreting and analyzing participants' lived experiences of constructing and negotiating identity.

Initially, I used open coding to label the data for each transcript. I left a wide margin on the left side of each transcript so that I could write the codes and labels directly next to the text. I coded most of the text line by line, but at times used brackets to code much larger chunks of text. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), larger chunks of text are less likely to be decontextualized. This was a time-consuming process, but very necessary to glean the codes and labels from a large amount of data. I found that

the coding process was cyclical. I went back over the transcripts several times, making sure I didn't miss something or used a code that didn't fit the data. Going over the data more than once also improved reliability, especially since I was the only rater (Bogdan and Biklen 2007). I had previously developed some basic codes which aligned with the research questions and reflected research concepts, making it easier to label the data. Those codes were as follows: race/class/gender/place, lack of knowledge, identity conflict, lack of belonging, family values and roles, cultural influences, institutional controls, imposter characteristics, code switching, and student success. Figure 3.1 provides an example of my initial coding process.

Figure 3.1: Initial Coding Process

Wendy, a 30 year old Native American graduate student discusses how race impacts her identity:

Exploiting race to get ahead

Getting by on luck, not ability
Successful because of race – teacher wants credit for minority success

Feeling exploitative and exploited
'I am the selling point'
Feeling of insecurity

Not sure it's getting better in academia
Not logical; but feelings still there

Success in graduate school not really based on ability; race is a factor

It comes back to being a student, but it seems that sometimes with my race, that I felt as a student, that I was exploiting it, like oh I can get grants or scholarships as a native, but also in the classroom situation because sometimes I felt that ok, not only is luck getting me through, using my luck bank, but does this teacher want to be able to say I got an Native American through. The professor wanted to get a Native student through. They can congratulate themselves, not based on my ability, think they are helping me, it is easy to discount, feeling exploitative and being exploited. I am the selling point, of course, I have no proof but it's sort of a feeling, I know that it is an insecurity in my own head. Need a show pony here. Those times where, weirdly, I don't know if it's getting better. That part seems to be still there. I don't know if its eased up, I logically know that it's completely ridiculous, you know that, it's not really based on what you can do, you hear or read so many articles that we have to reach out to NA students. We read those things too.

Once I completed the initial process by segmenting all of the data into meaningful codes, I then began to "connect the dots,' utilizing axial coding to bring together similar and consistent codes, creating patterns which led to the development of categories and major themes. Axial coding involves "interrelating the substantive categories which open coding has developed" (Punch 2005:210). Here, the data is transformed into themes which respond to the specified research questions through an intersectional framework. The resulting themes and categories in the table below were used to organize qualitative data into chapters:

Table 3.1: Themes/Categories Derived from Axial Coding

	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Major theme	What do they know that I don't know?	The Imposter Phenomenon	Straddling Two Worlds

Categories and minor themes	Family and Class Status
	➢ Real Work
	➢ Lack of a Safety Net
	➢ You Don't Ask
	➢ Family Matters
	
	Personal Expectations
	
	Cultural Images
	
	Regulatory Structure of Institutions
		The Great Pretender
		
		My Own Worst Critic
		
		Always on the Treadmill
			Code Switching
			
			Resident Expert
			
			Who Am I? Who Am I Supposed to Be?
			
			Adaptation - Success
			➢ First generation status
			➢ Class
			➢ Place
			➢ Gender
			➢ Race
			  • The 'Token'
			  • Exploited, Exploitative or Both?
			  • Appearances Matter

Open and axial coding provided a way to organize, describe, and analyze the large amount of qualitative data for this study. Coding is both "analysis and concrete activity which starts the analysis" (Punch 2005:199). Although I used a few previously

developed codes, I was looking for other codes that may arise in the process. Through the coding process, I was able to attach meaning to the interview data, including my own responses.

Quantitative Methods

I chose to use the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (Clance 1985) as a quantitative measure to help enhance content accuracy and external validity of the study (Appendix B). The Clance IP Scale (CIPS) was developed by Pauline Clance to help individuals determine whether or not they have imposter phenomenon (IP) characteristics and to what extent they are experienced (Clance 1985). This measure contains 20 statements and uses a 5-point Likert scale for responses, ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (very true). The CIPS is scored by adding together the numbers of the responses to each of the 20 statements included in the scale. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon inhibits a person's life (Clance 1985:20-22).

The Clance IP Scale (Clance 1985) has been extensively tested and found reliable across multiple studies. A Chronbach's alpha of .91 (Kumar and Jagacinski 2006), .92 (Chrisman et al. 1995) and .93 (Cokley et al. 2013) have been reported in previous studies. The CIPS has also been proven to reliably distinguish between imposters and non-imposters, thus demonstrating substantiation of known-groups validity (Cokely 2013:87; Holmes et al. 1993). Because of its high internal consistency, reliability and validity, the CIPS seemed to be the best way to measure possible imposter phenomenon characteristics of the sample population.

After making the decision to use the Clance IP Scale (Clance 1985), the first step was to contact the author, Pauline Clance, to request permission. Dr. Clance granted my

request and genuinely seemed interested in my work (Appendix C). Additional demographic questions were added so that the study was placed in sufficient social and cultural context (Appendix D). This data is useful in providing a quantitative representation of the extent to which the imposter phenomenon exists in similar contexts, thereby increasing the validity of the qualitative interview (reported) data. All 20 interviewees, and myself, were administered the Clance IP Scale (Clance 1985) prior to the interview. This was done to determine representativeness, how the interview sample of first generation graduate students compared with the larger online survey sample of female graduate students.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data was collected through an online survey (Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale) administered via QuestionPro. The survey was live for 4 weeks. 403 out of 800 students completed the survey during that timeframe, which is a little over 50% response rate. Only 11% of the respondents started the survey but did not complete it. After the 4 weeks were up, I downloaded all of the data from QuestionPro onto my computer for analysis.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable of investigation was the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) score. The four independent variables, based on specific demographic questions, included: racial identity (Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, 2 or more races, Black); mother's educational level, father's educational level, family income of respondent while in high school, and population of community while in high school.

Racial identity was measured using a question asking, "Which best describes your primary racial identity?" with responses broken into categories of Black or African-American, Asian or Asian-American, White or European American, Native American or Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, and Two or more races. Participants were able to select one of the racial categories and in a separate question answer whether or not they identified as Hispanic or Latino. The resulting race variables were dichotomous (0= participant did not select that racial category and 1=participant selected that racial category).

Mother's and father's educational level was measured using a question asking "What is your mother's highest education level?" and a separate question asking, "What is your father's highest educational level?" Participants could choose from six ordinal responses for this variable: 1=not a high school grad, 2=high school grad or equivalent, 3=some college, AA, or vocational degree, 4=Bachelor's degree, 5=Master's degree, 6=Doctorate or Professional degree.

Family income was measured using a question asking "What was your family's approximate yearly income when you were in high school? Participants could choose from eight response categories coded as ordinal variables: 1=< $20,000; 2=$20,001-35,000; 3=$35,001-50,000; 4=$50,001-75,000, 5=$75,001-100,000; 6=$100,001-150,000; 7=$150,001-200,000; 8=>$ 200,000.

Community population was measured using a question asking, "What is the approximate population of the community in which you attended high school?" Participants could choose from six responses coded as ordinal variables: 1 = < 10,000, 2

= 10,001-25,000, 3= 25,001-50,000, 4=50,001-75,000, 5= 75,001-100,000 and 6=> 100,000.

The Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) data was analyzed using the CIPS (Clance 1985) scoring method and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). First, I utilized the CIPS scoring method to determine an overall IP score among the 403 survey participants. This involved adding up the total response scores and identifying the corresponding scoring range. Next, I scored the CIPS for each of the 20 interview participants, plus myself, using the same process.

I utilized SPSS to provide the necessary descriptive statistics, such as mean, range, and standard deviation of the online sample CIPS scores. I also conducted correlational analyses, frequency distribution, cross tabulations, multiple linear regression analysis, and a one-way ANOVA. I created eight pivot tables, which allowed me to compare participant responses based on specific responses to demographic questions. I took note of any interesting statistics related to specific questions or responses. Before discussing the quantitative results, I will first provide relevant information regarding both the online and interview sample demographics, providing several figures to organize the data.

Chapter Four

Research Population

This chapter provides information on the research population. I will describe the general characteristics of both the sample population that completed the online survey and the interview sample. I will focus primarily on the following demographics: 1) age 2) Racial Identity 3) Approximate yearly income of participant's family while in high school 4) Mother's education level 5) Father's education level 6) approximate population of community in which participant resided while in high school and 7) country of citizenship. I will also provide more detail in discussing the qualitative sample.

Demographics

Age

For the online survey population, ages ranged between 21 and 64 years. The majority (44.3%) of respondents ranged from 25-34 years of age. There was wide diversity in age representation within the online sample. Interview participants also varied in age, with a range between 22 and 57 years. Out of 21 participants, there were 10 who were in their 20's, 6 in their 30's, 3 in their 40's, and 2 in their 50's.

Racial Identity

Only nine online survey participants identified as Hispanic or Latino (2.28%). Participants could choose from six categories of primary racial identity: 1) Black or African American 2) Asian or Asian-American 3) White or European American 4) Native American or Alaska Native 5) Pacific Islander or 6) Two or more races. The majority of respondents identified as White or European American, for a total of 331 respondents or 84%. Of the 21 interview participants, none identified as Hispanic or Latino. Twelve

participants reported 'White or European American' as their primary racial identity. Four participants reported 'Native American', 2 Asian, and 3 indicated 'Two or more races' as their primary identity. Of these three, 2 participants identified as Native American and White, and one participant as Native American, White, and Latino. The figure below shows the distribution of racial identity among the online and interview respondents.

Figure 4.1: Primary Racial Identity
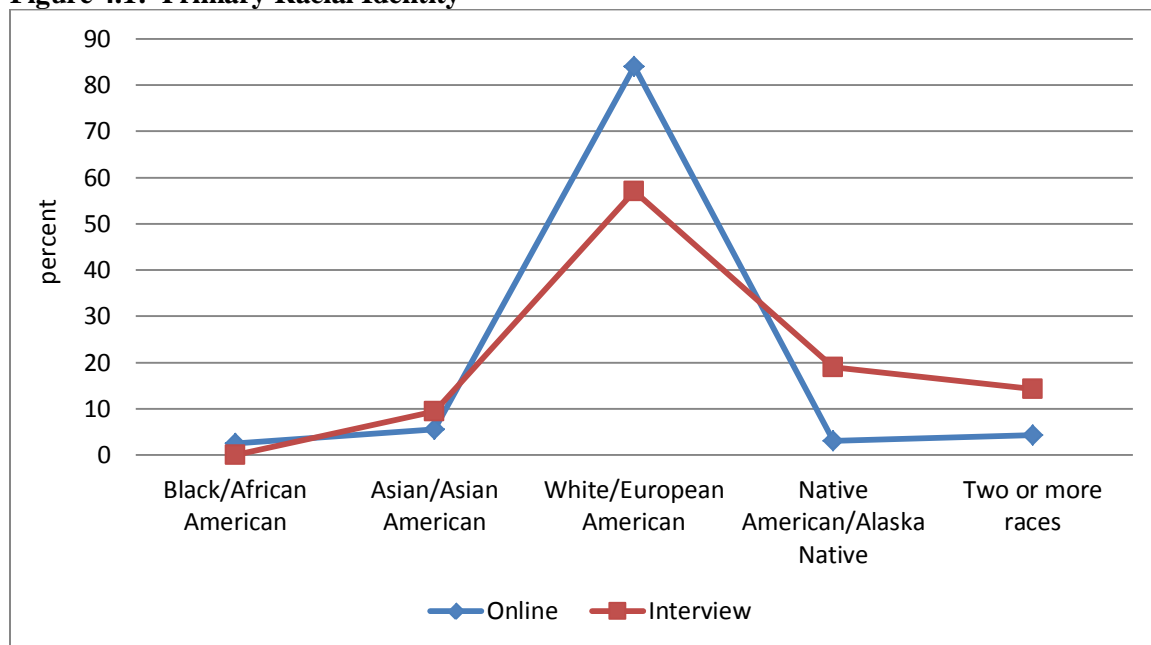
As illustrated in the figure above, the online and interview sample closely mirror each other in terms of racial composition, with only a notable difference indicated by the higher percentage of Native American respondents in the interview sample.

Family Income

The online survey respondents' reported approximate yearly family income while in high school ranged from less than $20,000 a year to over $200,000 a year. The majority of respondents reported family income between $35,0001-50,000 dollars a year, with a total of 84 respondents or 21.43%, which was only a fraction higher than the

second highest response, between $20,001 to $35,000 a year, with a total of 83

respondents or 21.17%. This indicates that 21% of respondents were from lower middle

class backgrounds and 21% were from poor to working class backgrounds.

Based on interview reports, nine participants indicated that their approximate

family income while in high school was between $20,000-35,000 a year, which can be

considered working class status. Five participants stated their income was $20,000 or

less per year, which can be considered below working class or poor. Two reported

between $35,000-50,000, which is considered lower middle class, and five participants

reported between $50,000-75,000 per year, which is considered middle middle class.

Overall, the majority of participants were from poor to working class families. No

participant reported family income over $75,000 per year. The figure below provides a

distribution of family incomes for both online and interview participants.

Figure 4.2: Approximate Yearly Family Income while in High School
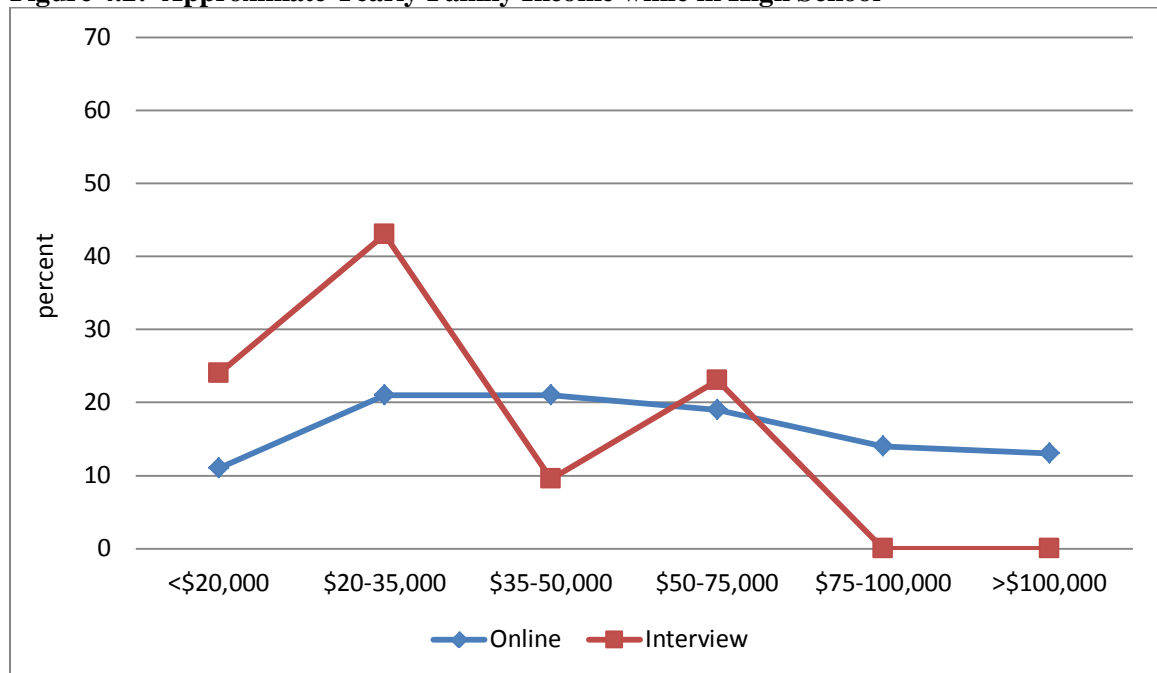
The figure above indicates a more even distribution of yearly family income for the online sample when compared to the interview sample.

Mother's and Father's Education Level

The highest education level for respondents' mother and father ranged from 'Not a HS grad' to having earned a 'Doctorate or professional degree'. The majority of online survey respondents (121) indicated that their mother had 'some college, AA, or vocational degree'. However, much like the racial identity category, there was only a fraction of difference (.26) between that category and 'HS grad or equivalent'. The difference was one respondent, for a total of 120.

For Father's highest education level, the majority of respondents indicated 'HS grad or equivalent,' with a total of 139 or 35%. There was a 10% difference between this and the next highest category, 'Some college, AA or vocational degree,' much more than it was for Mother's highest education level.

Because the interview participants were all first generation college students, none had parents who earned a degree from a college or university. Of the 21 interview participants, 7 participants reported that their father was not a high school graduate, 5 reported their mother was not a high school graduate, 14 reported their father was a high school graduate, 16 reported that their mother was a high school graduate.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the distribution of parental education levels for the online sample.

Figure 4.3: Mother and Father's Highest Education Level
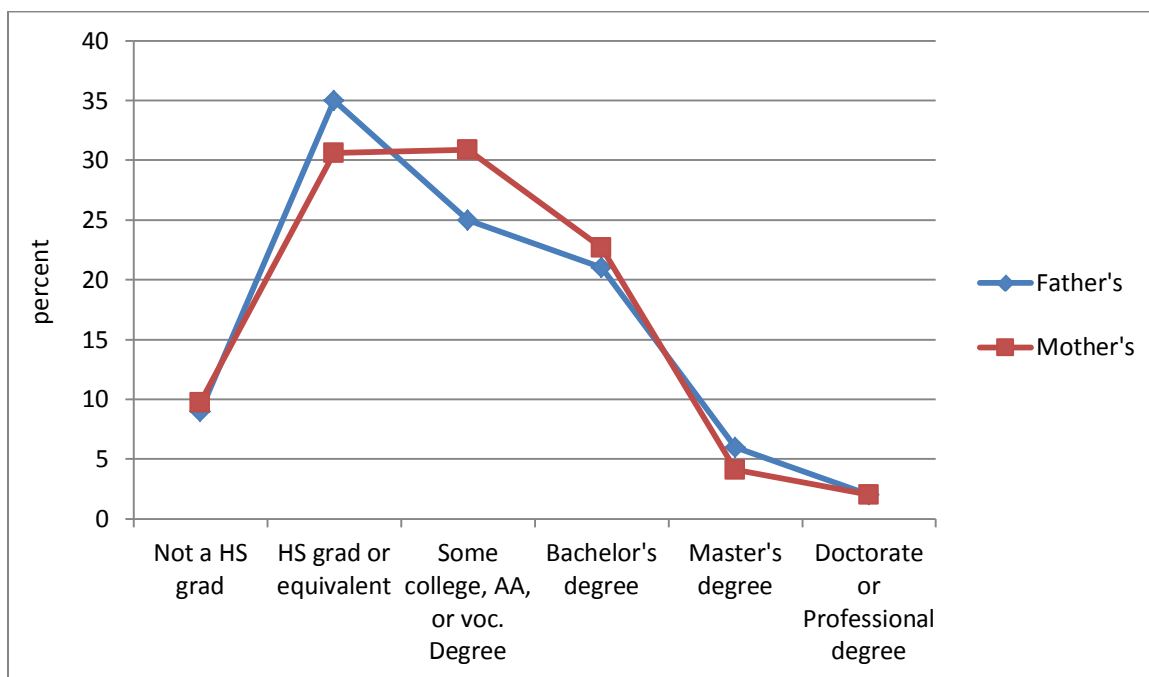
As you can see in the figure above, the trajectory of both mother's and father's educational levels tends to be similar. The only notable difference is that mothers were reported as having a higher percentage of some college, AA, or vocational degrees and more fathers were reported as having a high school diploma or equivalent.

Community Population

The six categories for approximate population of the community in which respondents attended high school ranged from 10,000 or below to over 100,000. The majority of online survey respondents (229) indicated they were from populations of 10,000 or below, which is over 58% of the total number of respondents. Of the 21 interview participants, 15 reported living in communities with populations of below 10,000 people. One participant reported living in a community with 10,000-25,000 people; one reported living in a community with 25,000-50,000 people; two

reported living in communities of 50,000-75,000 people, one reported living in community of 75,000-100,000 people, and one reported living in a community with a population of 100,000 or greater. Of the 15 participants who reported living in a community with a population fewer than 10,000 people, 7 were from very rural communities with populations below 1,000 people; 6 were from rural communities of 1,100 to 2,300 people; and 2 were from communities of 2,500 to 5,000 people. Figure 4.4 represents a categorical breakdown of community population for both the online and interview samples.

Figure 4.4: Approximate Population of Community while in High School
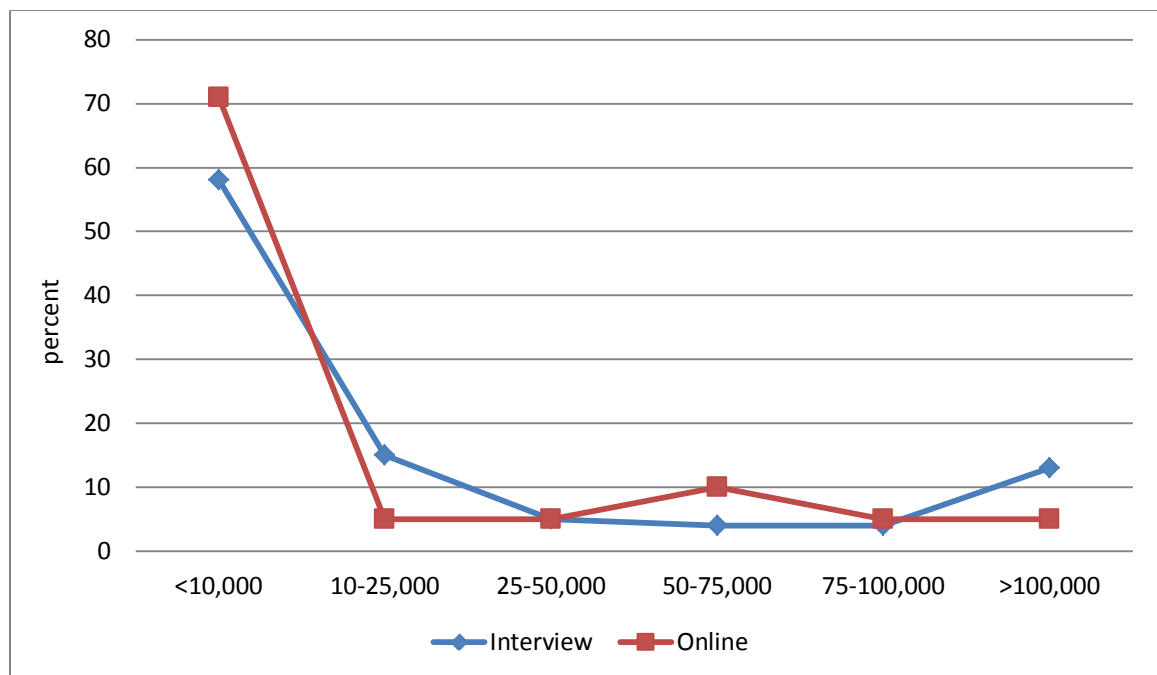
Again, the figure above indicates that both the online and interview samples closely parallel each other with respect to community population levels.

Citizenship

Citizenship was measured by yes/no responses. An overwhelming majority (363) of respondents indicated they were U.S. citizens, or 92% of the sample. For those respondents (8%) who were not U.S. citizens, the following countries of citizenship were reported: France, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Germany, Zimbabwe, Columbia, Japan, Jamaica, Kuwait, Kenya, India, Iran, China, and Poland. Only 2 out of the 21 interview participants were not US citizens. One participant was from Nepal and the other from China.

Degree Program

An additional characteristic of the interview sample population is the graduate level and program in which they were enrolled. Out of 21 participants, 6 were PhD students, and 15 were Master's students. Figure 4.5 highlights the different programs and degree levels of interview participants.

Figure 4.5: Graduate Programs and Degree Levels of Participants
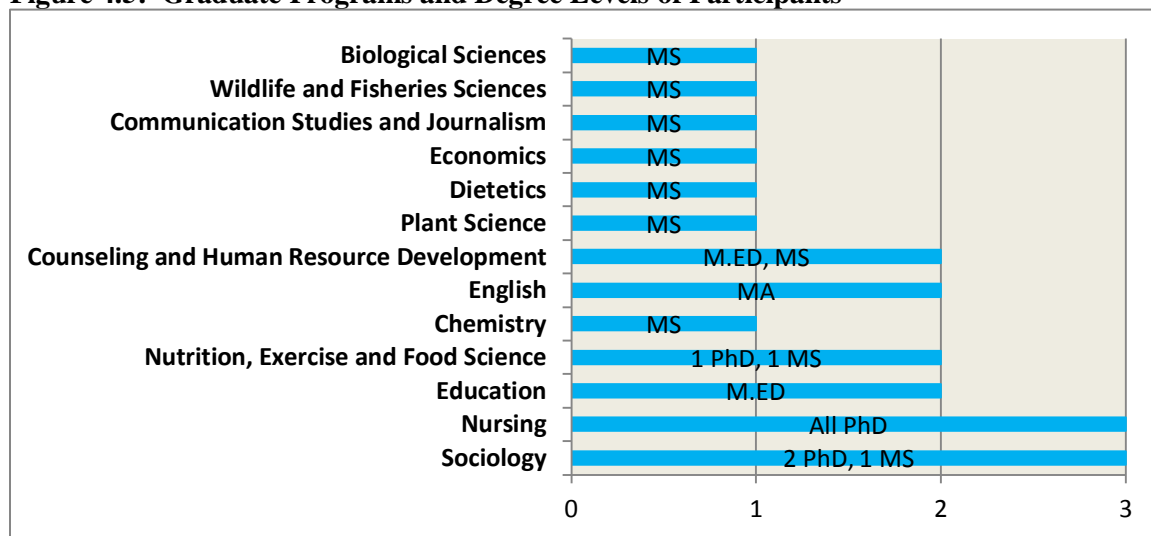
The figure above shows a fairly diverse representation of graduate programs among the interview sample. Nursing and Sociology programs had the highest

representation with three students each, followed by four programs with two students each and seven programs with only one student. There were more Master's level respondents than PhD's participating in the research, which is indicative of graduate student population in general. Now that I have covered the demographics of the research population, let me next turn to the quantitative findings from this research.

Chapter Five

Quantitative Findings

Purpose

  Quantitative data for this study is used primarily to specify the extent to which the imposter phenomenon exists in similar contexts, thereby increasing the validity of the qualitative interview (reported) data. As mentioned previously, the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), developed by Pauline Clance (1985), was administered as an online survey to 403 enrolled female graduate students. Demographic questions involving age, racial/ethnic identity, family income, parents' educational level, community populations, and citizenship, were also included in the survey.

Hypotheses

  Four hypotheses were developed based on the variables included in the survey. The purpose of the hypotheses was to explore whether and to what extent race, class, place, and parental education impacted the presence of imposter feelings in a sample of female graduate students.

Hypothesis 1: Respondents with minority racial identities will have higher CIPS scores than White or European American respondents.

Hypothesis 2: Respondents' CIPS scores will decrease as mother's and father's educational level increases.

Hypothesis 3: Respondents' CIPS scores will decrease as community population increases.

Hypothesis 4: Respondents' CIPS scores will decrease as yearly family income increases.
.

Statistical Analysis

As mentioned previously, the quantitative sample was comprised of 403 currently enrolled female graduate students who took the CIPS online survey, as well as 21 currently enrolled female graduate students who took the CIPS during the semi-structured interviews. I will provide statistical data for the online sample and also compare that data to the interview sample.

The quantitative statistics specifically measure the intensity of imposter feelings based on CIPS scores. These scores are calculated by adding together the numbers (1-4) corresponding to the specific responses for each statement. If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few imposter characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has imposter feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense experiences (Clance 1985). According to Clance (1985) the higher the respondent's score, the more frequently and seriously the imposter phenomenon interfere in the respondent's life.

A composite CIPS score can be determined by adding up the modal response score for each question. Using the Clance scoring method, the composite CIPS score for the online sample was 71; which indicates frequent imposter feelings. The lowest score in the online group was 26 (N=1) and the highest score was 100 (N=5). The frequency distribution, along with the sample mean (M=63.56) and standard deviation (SD=17.52) is shown in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: CIPS Online Survey Scores
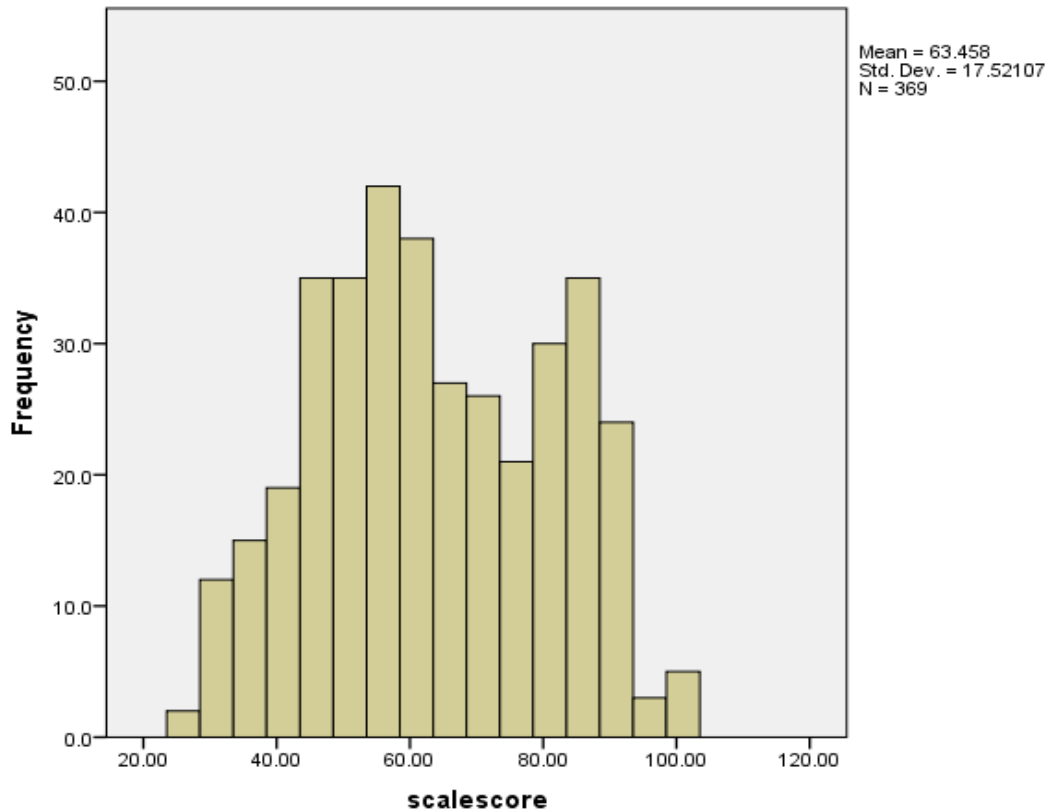
CIPS scores for the interview sample averaged a score of 66, which according to the Clance (1985) scoring method, is also in the range indicating frequent imposter feelings. The lowest score in the interview sample was 20 (N=1) and the highest score was 95 (N=1). Figure 5.2 below shows the interview respondents' actual CIPS scores in ascending order.

Figure 5.2: Individual Scores for Interview Respondents
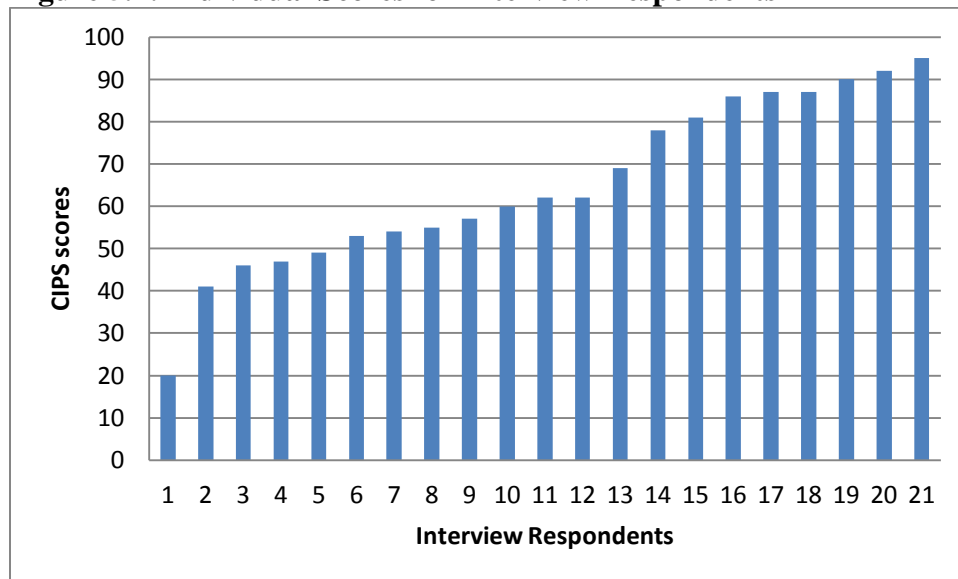
When looking at specific questions from the online survey, four questions

received a composite score of **5 - very true**:

- Question 7. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.

- Question 17. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.

- Question 18. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

- Question 19. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

Interestingly, these four questions also received high scores from the interview

sample. 67% of the interview respondents answered 'often' or 'very true' to question 7;

48% to question 17; 57% to question 18; and 86% to question 19. Some interview

respondents specifically referred to these questions during the interview. Feelings and

behaviors related to self-critique, self-doubt, 'not knowing' and 'others know more' were heavily prevalent among the interview respondents.

Only one question from the online survey scored lower than a modal response of 3:

- Question 9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

This question received a composite score of 1 –'not at all' among the online respondents. Once again, this question was also ranked low among the interview respondents, averaging a score of 2 – 'rarely.' Although 3 interview respondents scored this as 4- 'often;' the majority scored it as a 1 or 2. Based on the quantitative data from both the online and interview respondents, it appears that female graduate students rarely felt their success was due to some type of error. However, the term 'error' is ambiguous in itself (what or whose error?), which could also contribute to confusion as to what the statement actually represents.

There were six independent variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variable, CIPS score. Table 5.1 provides a representation of correlations between variables.

Table 5.1: Correlations between Variables

Measure	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Family income	**1.00**	.416**	.433**	.238**	-.138**	-.157**	-.376**
2. Mother's education	.416**	**1.00**	.569**	.106*	-.063	-.193**	-.284**
3. Father's education	.433**	.569**	**1.00**	.303**	.057	-.158**	-.329**
4.Community population	.238**	.106*	.303**	**1.00**	.205**	-.068	-.271**
5. Asian	-.138**	-.063	.057	.205**	**1.00**	-.043	-.106*
6. Native Am.	-.157**	-.193**	-.158**	-.068	-.043	**1.00**	.259**
7. CIPS score	-.376**	-.284**	-.329**	-.271**	-.106*	.259**	**1.00**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

The six independent variables listed above show a modest to moderate strength of correlation with the dependent variable (CIPS scores). The direction of the correlations between the independent variables and dependent variable is negative, with the exception of Native American racial identity, which is positive. A negative correlation means that for every categorical increase in the independent variables (family income, mother's and father's education level, community population), the value of the dependent variable (CIPS scores) decreases. Asian identity is also negatively correlated with the dependent variable (CIPS scores). On the other hand, Native American racial identity is associated with an increase in the value of the dependent variable (CIPS scores).

Multiple regression analysis provides a way to predict how the dependent variable, CIPS score, is affected by the independent variables. Table 5.2 below provides a representation of the model.

Table 5.2 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for CIPS Scores

Variable	B	SE(B)	β	t	Sig. (p)
Community Pop.	-1.05	.507	-.108	-2.072	.039
Family income	-2.77	.562	-.275	-4.928	.000
Mothers education	-1.82	.909	-.116	-2.003	.046
Father's education	-1.44	.851	-.102	-1.696	.091
Asian	-6.41	5.274	-.079	-1.216	.225
Native American	16.07	4.760	.160	3.376	.001

$R^2 = .028$

Examining the variable 'family income,' it could be determined that for every categorical increase in family income, we would expect a decrease in CIPS score by 2.77. The next variable, 'mother's educational level,' indicates that for every per rank increase in mother's education, such as moving from 'some college, AA, or technical degree' to 'bachelor's degree,' we would expect a decrease in CIPS score by 1.82. Interestingly, father's educational level was not significantly associated with a decrease in CIPS score (p =.091), meaning that 9% of the explanation is due to chance, instead of the usual 5% or .05 level used by most researchers. This might be explained by an all-female sample of graduate students who may place a higher value on their mother's education as a positive influence or example. The variable 'community population

while in high school' indicates that for every categorical increase in community

population, such as moving from a population of under 10,000 people to one between

10-25,000 people, we would expect a decrease in CIPS score by 1.05 points. Lastly,

Native American racial identity was associated with a rise in CIPS scores by 16 points.

This extreme increase reveals a highly significant relationship between Native American

racial identity and intense imposter feelings. Asian identity was not significant (p

=.225).

Taken together, the independent variables explain a significant proportion (28%)

of the variance in CIPS scores, R^2 = .28, F (11.06), p = .000. According to this analysis, a

respondent with low family income, parents who didn't go to high school, low

community population (rural area), and Native American racial identity, would have a

very high score on the CIPS, indicating frequent and intense imposter feelings. Results

highlight the significant impact of multiple disadvantages across race, class, gender and

place on the presence of imposter phenomenon characteristics.

The qualitative interview sample reflected similar outcomes when compared to

the online survey sample. The Native American respondents had the highest CIPS scores

of the sample, with an average score of 80 and a high score of 92, indicating frequent and

intense imposter feelings.

Fifteen of the 21 interview respondents were from rural areas of 10,000 or less.

Several respondents also grew up on farms. Respondents growing up in cities had an

average CIPS score of 54, which indicates moderate imposter feelings. It is important to

point out that those from urban areas had a wide range of scores, from 20 to 87, which

somewhat skews the data. The 15 rural respondents had more consistent scores, with a

composite score of 70, indicating frequent imposter feelings. Of the 6 respondents with scores above 80, all but one was from a rural area. Thus, the association between lower populated areas (rurality) and higher CIPS scores indicated by the online survey is also supported by the interview data.

As in the online sample, socioeconomic class was also a factor in the interview sample's CIPS scores. Of the 12 respondents who had the highest scores on the CIPS, 10 were from poor to working class backgrounds. Parental educational status was a factor in the online survey sample, with both mother's and father's educational status correlated with lower CIPS scores. However, mother's education was more significant. Because all of the interview respondents were first generation students, the effect of parental educational status on CIPS scores cannot be measured quantitatively, but is highlighted in the qualitative findings over the next three chapters.

It is curious to mention that one interview respondent may be considered an "outlier" of this study, in that she was white, middle class, from an urban area with a high score of 87 on the CIPS; however, this might indicate a more prominent influence of first generation student status than race, class, or place.

In conclusion, the quantitative findings provide much insight into the impact of first generation college status intersected with race, class, gender and place and the presence and intensity of imposter feelings. Results show that higher yearly family income, higher maternal educational status, and higher community population are associated with lower CIPS scores. On the other hand, Native American racial identity is associated with higher CIPS scores.

Quantitative results indicate that Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported by the data. Categorical increases in yearly family income and community population were associated with decreases in respondents' CIPS scores. Hypothesis 1 and 2 were only partially supported. Although Native American identity was associated with higher CIPS scores; all other minority racial identities were not significantly associated with CIPS scores. A per rank increase in mother's educational level was significantly associated with a decrease in CIPS scores; however, father's educational level was not significantly associated with CIPS scores.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight will present the heart of the study, the qualitative findings. Levels of understanding related to identity negotiation at the intersections of race, class, gender, and place for female first generation graduate students will be discussed. An examination of the imposter phenomenon across the intersections will be highlighted, along with the struggle of adapting to both home and academic environments, with implications for success.

Chapter Six

What do they know that I don't know?

I always feel like I don't know what I am doing. I don't know how to get through. I didn't know how to do this, what don't I know now? I kind of know, but I don't know how to make that happen. I don't know what I don't know, so that's frustrating. I don't know why that is, but I definitely feel like there should be something else I'm doing or not doing and I will get to the end and they will say I missed something.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

First generation college students often face more obstacles and are more disadvantaged than second generation students because their parents did not attend a college or university. I believe this to be true in my experience as a first generation student. Everything was foreign to me: the college application, the FASFA (federal financial aid), college life, classes, dorms, meal plans, expectations, and so on. It was a very strange and scary time to say the least. As a first generation student, I had to figure out how to apply to college, pay for college, register for courses, choose a major; basically, how to navigate a foreign world. I missed out on opportunities, such as scholarships and academic programs, because I didn't know they existed. Throughout my academic experience, I felt there were important things that I should have known, however; echoing one of my respondents above, *I didn't know what I didn't know.*

Levels of understanding for not only *what*, but *why* I didn't know, can be analyzed both prior to and during the academic experience. Important to this understanding is to examine the context of family and class status, personal expectations, cultural images, and the regulatory structure of institutions. Ignorance of the institutional structure may, as noted by my interview respondents, impact not only personal progress, but establish systemic isolation.

Family and Class Status

Parents' lack of knowledge and experience regarding the process of applying, getting accepted, and being successful in college can affect first generation students in very real ways. My parents did not possess an understanding or knowledge of academia, which resulted in a lack of guidance and direction. I had to spend much time figuring out the application process on my own and missed out on scholarships and other funding because I didn't know what to do or how to do it. This additional funding may have lessened the burden involved in supporting myself and paying back loans, allowing me to participate in academic activities and related programs instead of working full-time.

All but one respondent indicated in some way that the experience would have been better if one or both parents would have gone to college. Common responses included: *"I would have known what to expect;" "I wouldn't have had to figure everything out by myself;" "they would have given me more advice about how to go about college;" "the whole process of applying and getting the right classes would have been better;" "it would have given me more of a drive to extend;" "more exposure to certain things that I should have been looking at;"* and *"it would have been helpful to have someone telling me this is what you need to do, this is really important."*

In contrast, one international respondent reported that her experience would not have improved if either of her parents would have gone to college; in fact, it would have been worse:

> If my mom would have went [sic] to college back then, she probably would have got a job and wouldn't have been home. Better for us that she did not go to school. Dad was a contractor, so he was gone all the time.—Beth, Asian, middle class, urban, 30's.

Beth went on to state that admission to college was not a problem:

The system was so obvious....the admissions process; we didn't really need help. You knew you would be going to that college from the 12th grade. If you lived there you would be going to that college.

The contradiction between this respondent and the others can be explained by the fact that she was from a privileged family with a more traditional cultural background, coupled with the fact that there was only one college where the respondent lived, making it a much simpler process with little guidance necessary.

Many respondents shared how a lack of parental knowledge and experience of academia directly impacted their personal and academic progress:

A lot of it was bad advising or no advising. If my parents would have went to college, they would have said, here is what you do, this is how you get it done. So that's why it took me 3 years to get a 2 year degree and 3 more years to get the bachelors.--Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

After high school, I didn't know how to apply to college, my parents didn't know, so I wound up not applying. I had to take a year off because I missed deadlines.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

According to the excerpts above, delays in matriculation and degree completion were very real consequences of parental lack of knowledge and advisement. Another repercussion noted by respondents involved a reduction in financial aid due to missed deadlines and incomplete paperwork:

The process of applying was not easy. I was clueless. I had no idea about how to do it. My parents didn't know what to do.   We missed the financial aid deadline, so I didn't get as much money as I should have. -- Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

My parents were supposed to complete the paperwork for federal financial aid and they didn't know how important it was and didn't really understand it....so, I ended up missing out on Pell grants and some funding I wouldn't have had to pay back. -- Betsey, poor, 2 or more races, rural, 30's

Because first generation students often have to educate their parents about the processes involved in gaining admission to and being successful in college, the lack of understanding and change in roles can also cause conflict in the parent/child relationship and serve to further isolate students. As a result of this parent/child role reversal, first generation students tend to feel guilty instead of confident. Many of the respondents shared experiences of parental/child conflict related to role reversals:

> I was trying to get my Dad to complete the forms and he was like, 'you do it, you're the one going to college....I didn't even finish high school, what do I know?' It upset me. I kind of felt like he was angry at me or something. -- Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> I remember asking my parents what they thought I should do about classes, my major, and like, how to go about doing things in college.......they sort of just gave me that look...like they had no clue. I kind of felt guilty because I think they wanted to be the ones to guide me, like that's their job and they didn't know how to do it....-- Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

There were times that I also felt guilty and upset because I could see that my parents' lack of academic knowledge and experience caused a change in our relationship. They were no longer the 'experts' on all things and could not completely fulfill that parental role of 'knowing best;' they had to learn from me. Other respondents shared situations in which their parents did not understand academic processes and had to learn from them:

> My mom and I had to fill out the FAFSA. It was very difficult for her and she got really upset and frustrated over it. I had to tell her what to do and show her how to do it. She was so frustrated. It made me feel bad.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> My mom did not understand why some of my credits didn't transfer and I had to retake some things. My mom was pretty ticked about that.... I didn't want to do it either but I understood. But her reaction to things is a little different than how other peoples' parents

would react whose kids have gone or they've gone to school and they understand higher education and academia.--Isabel, White, middle class, urban, 20s

As evidenced in the words of my respondents, feelings of guilt and distress stemming from parent/child role reversals may intensify the sense of isolation first generation students experience while at college and often leads to increased self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

'Real' Work

My mother and father were high school drop-outs. My father was a farmer and my mother a stay at home mom to six children. Going to college was not something that was discussed at the dinner table, or anywhere else for that matter. Our family worked hard, and much value was placed on work. Work in this sense meant "physical," work, not the intellectual effort associated with higher education. This emphasis on physical work framed perceptions of how I should live my life and who I was supposed to be. It also contributed to my lack of knowledge about other types of work, including academic pursuits.

Within the context of a working-class family, practicality is often important; in this sense a job with defined duties, an end result and a good wage. There is little or no room for ambiguous titles or abstract ideas. When I told my parents I was going to college, there was definitely a lack of understanding. It's not that my parents weren't happy for me; it was that they didn't have that experience. College didn't exemplify work and practicality as they knew it; it was not a tangible thing. It was harder to measure, with an unclear end goal and no paycheck. This focus on 'real work' and practicality highlights the intersection of first generation status, class, and place. In addition to parents' lack of knowledge, experience, and understanding of academia;

socioeconomic status and the place in which someone lives often dictates behavior, values, and beliefs which influence and shape identity.

Many of the respondents could relate to their parents' emphasis of real work and practicality, which in turn caused conflict, confusion, and further isolation:

> I went to college because I really wanted to go, but my dad really doesn't understand there's a value to it. Like you don't have to go to school to get a job. Sometimes it's hard because he doesn't get it.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> My parents do like jobs, yes. There is less emphasis on having a job you are passionate about and more emphasis on the money, being able to support myself. I guess I want something bigger, more abstract. It's hard though, because there is also this pressure to think like them.--Phoebe, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> My dad, everything is black and white with him. If you are teaching, you should get paid for teaching. I say, that's not the point, it is to learn how to teach. He's like, you have to work, have some money coming in. "I remember my mom saying, 'Why the hell do you have to pay for an internship when you work for someone for free? It doesn't even make sense. Why do you have to pay to teach?'--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20s

Respondents not only echoed sentiments of feeling pressured to ascribe to parental notions of work and jobs, but some even questioned themselves and their choice to go to college:

> My dad, he didn't understand that I wasn't just messing around....he's like, why don't you have a job? I told him I didn't have time because I was taking classes and he couldn't grasp that, he didn't have that experience. It kind of made me feel like I wasn't doing enough, like, what I am supposed to be doing? --Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

> My family didn't feel like people with PhD's did much, like what do they do? A doctor is someone who helps other people, saving lives, fixing people. They would say, "What do those guys do? Sit around and talk to each other or what?" Where I come from, people say, "Why aren't you going to be a real doctor?" It makes me question everything, including who I am and what I am doing here.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

I can relate to these women and the struggle many first generation college students face growing up with parents and family who lack the knowledge and understanding of academia and focus on the practical aspect of work. Throughout my entire college experience I worked a full-time job. I passed up learning opportunities, such as study abroad and internship programs, because I needed to make money. My family's emphasis on work and having to support myself financially caused me to place a very high value on having a job. Not only did this limit my personal and professional growth, it caused me to feel even more isolated from other students and less knowledgeable about what I should be doing academically.

Many first generation college students have to put themselves through school by working full or part-time. Research shows that first generation college students spend over twice as much time working full-time jobs while in college (22%) than students whose parents held bachelor's degrees (9%) (Warburton, Bugarin and Nunez 2001:20). Respondents in my study also reported working part-time and full-time jobs in addition to being a graduate student. They shared how they felt increased pressure to work and get a 'real' job, not only because family and others felt they should, but also because they had to support themselves financially. These types of family and class issues were highly evident in this sample of female first generation college students.

To this day, my family doesn't really know what specific discipline I am studying or what kind of work I do professionally. After all, it is neither "physical," nor "practical" work. As one respondent stated, I too "want something bigger, more abstract"; however, the pressure felt within the family context is hard to escape. I continue to work full-time as I finish the requirements for my PhD. I have always

identified myself according to what job or position I held in the work world, which has contributed to my feelings of "not knowing;" keeping me on the periphery of academic culture.

Lack of a Safety Net

Not only did respondents feel pressure to adhere to family definitions of work, several respondents reported not having a "safety net" to catch them if they failed, ran out of money, or were not able to support themselves while in college. "Safety net" in this sense refers to the provision of financial and other types of support from parents and family. Socioeconomic status and other factors related to class and place may prevent some parents and family members from providing a safety net for their children to fall back on if needed. As evidenced by the excerpts below, the lack of a safety net greatly influenced these respondents in both positive and negative ways, resulting in increased self-sufficiency, as well as increased anxiety and fear:

> My mom was still not real stable, coming home was always hard, you didn't know where you were going to be, one winter break we were in a homeless shelter, a couple summers I lived with my aunt because my mom didn't have a place. I didn't have a safety net.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

> I don't ever relax because I'm always thinking I might fall down that ladder. I have friends and even my husband...has always had a safety net, they didn't give him everything, but he knew if he fell apart, the safety net would be there. It was very different for me to go to college without that safety net. I think that is the difference. Or just to know that the safety net is there if I fall down.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

> Sometimes I get angry that I didn't have the support that other students did. I mean, I don't blame my parents, but it would have been nice not to have to worry so much about money and how to pay for everything. Of course I got student loans, but I still had to live. I didn't have anything or anyone to fall back on in case I ran out of money or whatever. I don't want my kids to have to do that.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> Well, as far as I'm concerned, I have always been responsible for my education in every way. My family didn't have much and certainly couldn't pay my tuition. I didn't have many options other than to go to school and I had to figure out how to do it all. No one was going to help me out....it has been a really hard road. --Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Several respondents went on to describe more in-depth the personal repercussions related to family socioeconomic and class issues, and how they continue to influence current behaviors, attitudes and identity:

> You are more economics conscious...very conscious of everything. I get very uncomfortable when I have a lot of money, not that I blow it on something, it is a weird responsibility; we were very much paycheck to paycheck growing up.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Wendy goes on to say:

> It didn't occur to me until much later how much sacrifice there really was. Places you didn't get to go, people you should have met, things you didn't have, now it's not necessarily an overcompensation, there isn't this feeling that I have to do everything, but it is very much a strict understanding of reality. Being raised in constant survival mode, there is not much thinking beyond next month, are you still going to have a house, why would you want to set a goal? Now you are being unrealistic.

Other respondents emphasized the fear and anxiety related to family and class status, as well as the resulting isolation from academia:

> I'm never secure, I could fall down that ladder any moment. My dad did. He took all that money and blew it, I watched him lose everything when he had it, I watched her never have anything, so I am never relaxed about it.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's.

> Money has always been and still is an issue. I'm always thinking about how I can work more or do something extra to make money. I mean I go to class and study, but there's little time for anything else besides work. I've never felt really connected to the department or college like other students. I don't have time for it.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Students from poor or working class backgrounds must often focus on the reality of survival – ways to persist not only as a student, but in life itself. These students do not have the luxury of having their needs taken care of by parents and family so they can focus solely on their academic pursuits. They must also focus their energy on how to support themselves and often times, their family; often leaving them with little time or motivation to gain knowledge of the institutional structure or academic culture.

You Don't Ask.......

Many respondents who paid their own way reported not asking their parents or family members for help. These students may have actually had some type of safety net, but felt they could not use it. As stated previously, the role reversal students undergo when they have to educate their parents about academia can make them feel guilty instead of confident. This can include feeling guilty about asking for help. In my own life, many times I wanted to ask my family for financial assistance or even emotional support and I felt like I couldn't do so. I'm not exactly sure why; it could be the sense of pride I felt doing it myself, but I believe most of it came from being the one that chose to leave home and the potential guilt I'd feel about asking for help. So, I didn't ask.

Socioeconomic or class status influences whether students' families have the ability to help pay for college and living expenses; place and first generation status influences whether students ask their families for help, partly because where they came from and the values they grew up with may not have emphasized the need for higher education, coupled with the fact that their parents lack knowledge and experience because they did not go to college. The intersection of these experiences ends up creating a situation in which students don't ask for help and believe they must be self-sufficient.

Going to college is their choice; a choice that their parents, and often none of their family members, did not make and often do not understand. It was interesting to discover how many respondents reported not asking their parents or family for help, regardless of whether they had the means to do so:

> I know my parents probably would have helped if I've asked, but I don't want to ask. If I got to a place where I didn't have any money, like in my undergrad, I'd ask, but honestly I am more likely to ask my boyfriend for money. He's here, he gets it.--Isabel, White, middle class, urban, 20's

> I never wanted to ask my parents or family for money and stuff; I always thought I should do it myself. Even if I was in a bind, I didn't want to ask them for help. I guess I knew they didn't have a lot of money and I didn't want to make them feel bad, like they should be making more money so they could help me.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> It was my choice to go to school....I could've just gotten a full-time job somewhere like my parents, but I decided to go to school. My parents didn't go to college, so I kind of felt guilty and didn't want to ask them for help.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> When I first went to school, I was worried about money but I didn't ask my parents for it. It's weird, I saw other people whose parents were paying their tuition and giving them spending money, but I didn't want to be that way. Everyone back home was working hard and I kind of felt like I should work hard too and do it all myself.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

The respondents' words emphasized guilt, pride, and parent/child role reversal in the decision to not ask for financial assistance or support despite needing it, which reinforces the implication of self-sufficiency as a necessity. Not asking for help and being self-sufficient might also help explain why poor to working class first generation students feel like they "don't know." They may not ask professors and peers for assistance, feeling like they must go it alone, which in turn leaves them feeling even less knowledgeable and more isolated.

Family Matters

In the context of family, cultural and other class-based values also impact the first generation student greatly. Loyalty to family is often a cultural expectation; therefore, family members may put pressure on first generation students to come home and spend time with them or take care of a specific family member, such as a parent or sibling. Family culture and working class values may cause first generation students to feel pressure to remain loyal to family and familial roles while trying to balance the demands of being a student.

Below are some interview excerpts which highlight this struggle, resulting in respondents feeling guilty and even more isolated if they do not live up to familial expectations and responsibilities:

> I just feel a lot more stress like you know, trying to figure out rent, getting schoolwork done, doing my GA stuff, so much stuff, trying to do everything, making time to see my family, cousin. Most of the time people understand but...... I feel guilty not going home.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

> My family was a little angry at me for leaving because I was one of the first ones to leave from that side of the family. So they weren't very happy when I moved away, I get grief about it, they are proud of me, but then again they are really not. My family and my extended family do pressure me to come home. They don't understand what all goes into being a student.--Isabel, White, middle class, urban, 20's

> In my family, you are supposed to drop everything and come home if someone needs you or if there is something going on that is important. If you don't, then you are the bad one....like, I can't just go home any time and because I can't, they make me feel guilty about it. Like I feel I am more of an outsider because I left.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> It is hard to work a job and have to pay for everything, go to school, and also make time to see family or help take care of them. It's a lot of pressure to do everything, you know? I feel like I am expected to and when I don't, I feel like I let them down in some ways.—Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Similar to my respondents, I have always felt an intense loyalty to my family and pressure to fulfill familial role expectations and responsibilities. I have quit good jobs, turned down professional and academic opportunities, put off school, and moved closer to be there for my family. Despite all of this, I still feel isolated. Some of this may have to do with the fact that I am the only female child; some of it has to do with the fact that I am the only one who left home, and some of it has to do with wanting a different life; one that goes beyond how I was raised and my family's expectations and values.

Families differ in culture and values, as well as roles and expectations of members. Some more traditional working class families like mine may incorporate gender roles that are tied to specific expectations. Fuller (2004) discusses how working class female college students go home to help family more often than males.

As I mentioned above, I was the only girl in a working class family of six children. My parents were very traditional, meaning the gender line was obvious and everyone followed it. My role was definitely that of a caretaker. The boys were considered superior and I was taught to wait on them. I literally brought my father his plate at mealtimes and my mother and I always made sure my brothers' needs were attended to before our own. I never really agreed with this type of structure but was obliged to respect and internalize it.

Several respondents in this study specifically refer to the impact of gender roles within the family, causing them to feel more responsible for the care and well-being of their parents and grandparents:

> I feel like because I am a girl, I have to be more responsible for my parents and like, help them out more and check on them. My brothers don't really take on that responsibility...it's not expected. I'm the one they call when things happen and I am so many hours away.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

I do feel more pressure to make sure my mom and grandma are ok back home, even though I have 2 brothers who aren't going to school. I'm not sure if it is just a female, nurturing thing, but it's what I do. Sometimes it is really hard because I am so busy with school and everything.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

It might be because I am female; the boys are much more removed than me and my sister. I feel like I need to take care of my parents more than they do.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Additionally, research shows that minority students often have increased cultural expectations to fulfill family obligations and duties (Phinney and Haas 2003). In this sense, gender intersects with race to place even more of a burden on female first generation students with a minority racial identity. As reflected in the literature, several female racial/ethnic minority respondents in this study identified with an increased cultural expectation to help support family members both financially and emotionally, which in turn exerted more pressure on them:

In our culture, family is everything. We are expected to help each other out and be there for each other when times are tough. If someone is sick or dies, the expectation is to do what we can. I've had to leave school for periods of time to help my family. The expectation is still there even if I am away at school.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

I was raised with values that family is most important and everything else is secondary. You make sacrifices and the expectation is that you will help out, no matter where you are or what you are doing, going to college or whatever. We are more connected, like extended family and stuff, than other cultures.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

My father wishes that I can support him and my mother so they don't have to work. In my culture, the kids and parents, grandparents, there's more of a connection. I need to give them money. I try to send money back to my parents. I want to save up some money for them.--Violet, Asian, poor, urban, 30's

According to my respondents, familial role expectations intertwined with race, class, and gender, influence first generation female college students by causing them to

feel guilty or pressured to go home and spend time with family or to help take care of them by providing emotional or financial support. This guilt and pressure may explain why first generation college students feel they *don't know* or that *others know more*, because they are either physically absent from school to help fulfill family expectations or mentally absent due to feelings of guilt and pressure to live up to their familial responsibilities.

In summary, an examination of the effects of family and class status on first generation female students' knowledge and understanding of the institutional structure indicates that a lack of parental knowledge and experience of academia, a lack of family financial and/or emotional support, familial values, definitions of work, and role expectations can get in the way of students' personal and academic progress and lead to increased self-sufficiency, as well as increased isolation from either home, academia or both.

Personal Expectations

First generation college students often do not know how to apply and gain admission to college, as well as what college life is like and what to expect from the college experience. As mentioned previously, family and class status influence both what and why they don't know and often impact how students view themselves and others. Personal expectations, or one's own view of the context, also influence what and why they don't know both before and during the college experience. Many students who do not have parents or family members who went to college have expectations based on their own experiences or knowledge gained from others. Respondents in this study identify how the lack of personal knowledge affected their perception and experience of college:

I didn't understand how it worked.... my parents didn't have that experience. They were like, "Just go, just show up." No one I knew had ever gone to college, I didn't know I was supposed to bring sheets, or blankets, and a pillow, I didn't have school supplies and stuff. I didn't know we had to purchase text books, I just assumed they would be given to me.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

Some of my older friends only told me about the stuff that was fun in college, like going to parties, hanging out, things like that. I remember them telling me they didn't have to go to class all the time.....that was my image of college life so I didn't take it very seriously.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

I didn't know what to expect...I think it would have been nice to have someone know more about what it's like to be in college and try to balance all of these things.--Phoebe, White, middle class, rural, 20's

Personal expectations are affected by gender, class, and race perceptions and experiences. Women have experienced tremendous advances over the past few decades; however, many structural constraints to women's progress still exist, and gender socialization continues to shape women's lives (Dumais 2002:45). Research shows that despite women's gains in access to higher education, women have not yet achieved parity (Sax 2001; Mullen 2012).

Earlier research on gender inequality in education often "treated all aspects of education as disadvantaging women" (Jacobs 1996:156). Research now looks more closely at the ways in which "women are advantaged in some aspects of education, as well as those in which they continue to trail men" (Buchmann, Diprete, and McDaniel 2008:4). For example, men still earn 83 percent of all degrees in engineering, 82 percent in computer and information sciences, 70 percent in philosophy, and 69 percent in economics; whereas, women earn the majority of degrees in female-dominated fields: 77 percent in psychology, 80 percent in education, and 85 percent in nursing and other

health professions (Mullen 2012:36).   Research indicates that a third of all men (or women) would have to change majors in order to achieve gender parity across majors today (Mullen 2012: 36).

Additionally, Correll (2004) points out that men and women share cultural beliefs about gender and specific competencies, which bias perceptions of their own abilities as well as their pursuit of certain fields, which they interpret in gendered ways. According to Sax (2008), only about half of women consider themselves above average or in the highest 10 percent compared to over two-thirds of men; this gender gap widens even further during the college years (Mullen 2012:37).

Individual gender perceptions and experiences can influence student's personal expectations of college. Some respondents indicated that being female was tied to the expectation that the college environment, like society, was biased more favorably toward males and that they would have to work harder:

> My own perception, no matter where I was, in any capacity, as hard as the men have had to work, it seems like the women have had to work 10 times harder. It's was always in ways no one really ever saw, I thought it was always something I felt I had to make people see beyond, like I am female but I can handle this, I can. --Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

> I know that things are not equal between men and women in society; so, my expectation of the college environment was that the men were still above the women in most ways. I figured I would always have to work harder to try and be on the same level as male students.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> I expected college to be much like life in general. Men are treated better in society, so I expected college to pretty much be the same way. I thought I would have to work harder in college to stand out, especially because I was going into a male-dominated field.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

Additionally, these and other respondents reported personally experiencing gender bias and discrimination:

> Actually having those experiences where I know just as much about this as my brother or my male friend does, but they are talking down to you.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

> I've had instances where I was not taken seriously, was laughed at, or just plain ignored because I'm a girl. It didn't feel good. Yeah, it made me angry.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

I've also experienced gender discrimination both personally and professionally. Within my family I was often ignored, purposely left out of important discussions, and had little input on major decisions. In the workplace, I've had similar treatment, as well as jobs where I was required to look "pretty;" often dealing with offensive comments and sexist behavior. Several respondents shared similar experiences of discrimination in the workplace:

> Where I worked in high school, me and a guy started working at the same time, and I worked more than him, plus he was stealing from the store; and he kept getting raises and I didn't, none of the girls did....the last place I worked, me and a girl got hired at the same time and the guy said when we got introduced, "oh he must have needed something to look at" instead of because I was qualified.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

> Being an Assistant Manager.... you were the only manager of the store. I had to take care of every guest issue and I've had some male customers come in and say I want to talk to the MAN ager.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I have been treated differently in jobs I've had. When I was waitressing, we (the girls) had to wear short shorts, look a certain way, kind of the hooters mentality. The guys had no rules. And they got their pick of shifts, manager positions. Plus, having to deal with vulgar comments and outright harassment at times.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

Personal experiences with gender bias and discrimination are significant in shaping expectations and defining various facets of first generation college students' educational experiences (Saenz 2010). Therefore, many female students who have had negative gender experiences often expect similar experiences at college. From an intersectional perspective, all of the respondents quoted above came from poor to working class families, and one of the respondents was also of a racial/ethnic minority.

Conversely, several respondents reported no personal experiences of gender bias or discrimination:

> I never thought that I was different from the other guys. Being female was no different; it did not hinder or help me.--Beth, Asian, middle class, urban, 30's

> Well, we are matriarchal; women traditionally hold power roles in our tribal traditions. So I think gender is less of an issue because we were raised in a certain way.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

> In my family, we were treated the same, me and my brother. I didn't suffer because I am a girl. In the school system, I was treated the same, from my generation, women are becoming more important.--Violet, Asian, poor, urban, 30's

> I don't know about any obstacles, most of the role models in my life are strong females; my mom is a pretty strong female. All my mentors have been female, independent. I want to be a strong female. –Brooke, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> My mother was a strong female role model, so I think gender never had a negative effect.--Josie, White, poor, rural, 50's

These respondents did not view being female as oppressive, and also did not have personal expectations of gender inequality in college. This can be elucidated by respondents having strong female role models and cultural traditions; but more specifically, by gender socialization which occurs within families and schools.

Mullen (2012) suggests that when we focus all of the attention on gender, "we tend to overlook much more serious and enduring disparities of social class, race and ethnicity" (pg. 38). Gender may be experienced as a disadvantage by some, but not all women because of differences in class, race or place. As evidenced by respondents in this study, gender advantages or disadvantages vary across the intersections of race, class and place. Thus, women of various racial/ethnic, socioeconomic and other backgrounds may develop differing views of gender relations (Aronson 2003:907).

Gender is influential in shaping identity and affecting women's experiences and perceptions of higher education. Race and ethnicity also have an influence that often differentiates experiences and opportunities (Zamani 2003). Female first generation students of color who are also from poor to working class backgrounds may experience multiple forms of oppression; with race, class, and gender converging to disadvantage students.

A student's race and ethnicity can have a fundamental impact on how college is experienced. Racial/ethnic minority students often report higher levels of alienation and perceptions of discrimination in regard to predominately white campuses (Fischer 2007). Most researchers agree that racial/ethnic minority students' precollege perceptions and experiences shape the perceptions and experiences they will have in college (Museus and Quaye 2009; Saenz 2010).

Almost all of the respondents with a racial/ethnic minority identity reported experiencing discrimination and alienation prior to their college experience, which caused them to expect the same type of experience during college:

Like back in public school..... you have that awkward moment in class, you feel left out, like you are not good enough..... it's like, (with college) get ready for that struggle again. –Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

I expected college to be the same way it was throughout my education....I knew I would experience some form of discrimination.....it was inevitable.— Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

I did go to a school where we had to walk past cars that had stickers like ...'The only good Indian is a dead Indian.' That set the tone for the day. –Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

Faith goes on to describe specific discriminatory experiences in high school:

I had friends who would copy my algebra homework and they would get higher grades than me and it was the same work. I had teachers tell me that it couldn't be possible that it was my work or they didn't expect someone like me could do so well. I had a lot more experience with race than I did gender.

Faith's words indicate that for her, race disadvantages overshadowed possible gender disadvantages, which might indicate that race was more salient in terms of her identity. However, the fact that her culture was matriarchal most likely influenced her perceptions and experiences of gender.

Research indicates that "perceptions of a poor racial campus climate can have a negative effect on students' ties to the academic and social arenas of college life" (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Osegura 2008:263). Thus, for many racial/ethnic minority students, personal expectations of alienation and discrimination in college can prevent them from becoming more involved in academic culture, causing increased isolation and a lack of knowledge.

Of the two international student respondents in this study, one perceived a lack of discrimination or alienation at college;

> People are good....much friendliness...the thing is, I come here as a wife, my husband was here first in the U.S. It helped prepare me to be here.--Beth, Asian, middle class, urban, 30's

while the other shared a perception that she would be treated differently:

> Before coming here.....I wanted to break this barrier, joining to others in the community, because I wanted to learn from the culture, but it is hard...they have different cliques and separated groups. Americans hang out with Americans...we are the aliens.--Violet, Asian, poor, urban, 30's

The differences in the two responses might be explained by the fact that the first respondent's expectations were influenced by her husband's experiences and knowledge, whereas the second respondent had nothing else to draw upon regarding college, only her personal perception of segregation and alienation.

Class intersects with gender and race to influence personal expectations of college life. Many first generation college students come from poor to working class families and have difficulty adjusting to the reality of class differences in academia. Research shows that "social class continues to be the strongest predictor of who will attend and graduate from college—one that far outweighs the effects of either gender or race and ethnicity" (Mullen 2012:36). Some respondents from poor to working class backgrounds had preconceived ideas about what constitutes the "typical" middle to upper class college student, with many experiencing a lack of belonging because of class differences:

> I thought college was this grand place, you know the 'ivory tower' or whatever. Smart wealthy people everywhere, studying or talking in these little groups about some intellectual topic, wearing the sweaters and stuff....I didn't think I'd fit in.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> Most of my friends come from upper class, their parents pay their rent, their car, and they have credit cards from their parents and stuff. I can't imagine that.... they go out a lot and I'm more on a strict budget.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I guess I was a little anxious that I didn't have money and none of my family came from money....I had this idea in my head that most college students had parents who paid for their education. I didn't fit that mold.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> One girl had a Porsche and SUVs were the new thing. I didn't know how to deal with the wealth thing. Are you kidding me? I struggled with the wealth issues (at college). My freshman year I didn't have anything.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

Faith goes on to describe what happened when she first arrived at college:

> The cash I had left after working all summer I gave to my mom for gas money to get home, so I had like $40 on me and I was in this weird place where everyone had money. I was trying to figure out where I could get sheets, etc. so before my mom went back she was like, "let's get a paper and see if there were any rummage sales to get sheets" and then she left and I really was alone and confused.

Three of the four respondents quoted above also had previous experiences of discrimination and alienation based on their race, which affected their perceptions of higher education, causing them to anticipate isolation and a lack of belonging.

Personal expectations influence how first generation college students perceive and experience higher education, specifically the social and academic aspects of college life. Individual expectations and perceptions can be shaped by knowledge from others; but more importantly, by previous experiences of race, class, and gender. Students whose parents did not attend college do not have the advantage of receiving first-hand knowledge and experience, which could provide a more accurate perception of college life.

Cultural Images

Cultural images and social constructions of college life pervade society. Many first generation college students' only knowledge or frame of reference comes from the media they consume; specifically movies depicting college life. According to Tucciarone

(2007), students often learn how to make meaning of college life through films. Several

respondents identified movies as their primary source of knowledge about the college

experience. In the absence of personal experience, film helps construct their perceptions:

> Pretty much my only knowledge of it (college) was what I saw in movies, my parents didn't know what I was getting into.--Phoebe, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> I think it would have been easier because I had no idea going into this college experience. The college life, you think of Animal House and what you see in movies.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

> You don't know what to expect if you don't have someone who experienced it telling you....before I went to college I thought it was a lot of partying and frat houses, stuff you see in movies. --Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

Interestingly, most of these films portray college life similar to what the

respondents above reported; partying, lack of disregard for rules and authority, and little

or no emphasis on academics. Multiple lists of top 10 films about college life emphasize

the partying frat boy experience, with barely a nod to intellectual pursuits. Almost all of

these popular college movies, such as Animal House (1978) and Van Wilder (2002), have

white, middle-class males in leading roles as students, professors, and administrators.

Women in these films are most often portrayed as clueless and submissive, or as sexpots

who serve as a diversion for men and objects to be conquered (usually in high numbers).

Movies that seem to portray a more serious depiction of college life, such as

Orange County (2002), The Skulls (2000), and Dead Poets Society (1989), also boast

white, middle to upper class males in leading roles. Professors and administrators of the

colleges are white males as well. Virtually no mainstream films about college life

portray women in leading roles or administrative capacities. One of the few popular

films with a female lead, Legally Blonde (2001), showcases an upper class, white, "girly

girl" who just happens to be intelligent (although that is downplayed by her outward appearance).

In addition, there are very few minority roles in college movies, with most of those representing some stereotype or sidekick to the leading white male. Bourke (2013) indicates that minority characters in college films were usually 'outsiders who served the functions of entertainment and potential aggressor for the White students' (p. 463). In some college films, there is only the "token" minority student character, meant to represent racial or ethnic diversity in society (Bourke 2013).

Taken as a whole, the cultural images represented in college-themed movies highlight the intersection of race, class and gender to create a depiction of college as a white, middle to upper class male institution. Respondents in my study also indicated support for this representation:

> I didn't have an idea of what college would be like because no one in my family went and no one told me what to expect. I always pictured these old, white guys with little bow ties giving these grand lectures. Not sure where that came from, probably tv and movies--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I knew that I was going to be a minority in college, but it's hard to really know what it will be like. If you think about how it is shown in the movies or on tv, then it would be a bunch of white students, professors, and people in charge--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> I think society portrays college in a certain way...I mean I don't remember watching movies with much diversity in the characters, especially older movies. It was all....you know, the rich white boys.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Anticipation of class, gender, and/or racial differences based on personal expectations or cultural images can impact students' reality, including their sense of belonging and "fit" both prior to and during the academic experience. This feeling of

difference and disconnect can manifest itself more deeply, eventually causing students to feel like imposters in academia, which I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter Seven. Dasgupta (2011) suggests that "imposter feelings are closely related to a sense that one does not belong in a particular high-achievement domain" (p. 11).

Personal expectations and cultural images impact how the first generation student views and experiences college and may contribute to their lack of understanding and knowledge. Personal expectations are influenced by individual experiences and perceptions of race, class, and gender, as well as knowledge gained from peers or others.

Students who do not have personal experiences or family and friends who provide valid knowledge from real experience may rely on movies or television to help construct their perceptions and expectations of college. We construct meanings of films filtered through our own experiences and perceptions (Bourke 2013). This "constructed knowing" can provide a disadvantage for students, based on the grossly inaccurate images portrayed in films and television; leaving them feeling even more disconnected from college because they don't quite "fit" the white, male, middle class student and have unrealistic notions about academic rigor and extra-curricular activities.

My idea of college included both the "party" image, as well as the middle to upper class image. My personal experience of college was limited to the two times I was on a college campus, both of which involved partying at homecoming festivities. I did not go on a campus visit prior to attending college, so basically the images I had were more in line with what is depicted in college-themed movies. I thought "partying" was a big part of college life and I could relate to that; but I also had this idea that people who went to college had money or came from money, that most of these people's parents

probably went to college, and that males still dominated on all levels. I'm not sure if it derived from my own experiences with gender and class or cultural images (maybe both), but there was this sense that I didn't quite fit.

In summary, first generation students' expectations of college are influenced by personal experience, knowledge gained from others, and/or cultural images of college life depicted in movies or television. Pre-college experiences and perceptions of race, class, and gender help create similar expectations of college life. For example, if a student has experienced discrimination based on race, gender, and/or class, then they will most likely expect similar kinds of treatment in college.

Often, knowledge gained from others centers around partying or having fun in college, which can provide a skewed perspective for first generation students. Movies and television also predominantly portray college as a time to party, with little regard for rules and authority, and little or no emphasis on academics. Additionally, these cultural images heavily endorse college as a white, male, middle-class institution. Both personal expectations and cultural images at the intersections of race, class, and gender create an expectation of college life for first generation college students, which limits what they know and helps explain why they don't know.

Regulatory Structure of Institutions

The structure of a college or university is organized to regulate the behavior of its students, faculty and staff. Knowing how to navigate this bureaucratic structure is almost as important as knowing how to be successful academically. Institutional structures "set the rules of the game, and thus, advantage some interests rather than others without actually hardwiring biases into the system" (Nicholson-Crotty and Meier

2003:81). These rules of the game "develop and emerge out of a dynamic that reifies {race, class and gender} paradigms of power and powerlessness" (Salazar 2005:240).

Often, first generation college students have difficulty playing by the rules of an institution, primarily because they are not on a level playing field, lacking the social capital that other students possess. Social capital can be defined as "characteristics of a social structure that support individuals so that they may profit or advance in some manner" (Nelson et al. 2006:1). Social capital includes the resources available to individuals as a function of their location in the structure of their social relations (Adler and Kwon 2002). Coleman suggests that social capital comes from both the relationship between a student and his or her parents, and relationships between student's parents and other adults, primarily adults with connections to the college (Perna and Titus 2005:488). Thus, students whose parents did not attend college may lack the knowledge and connections that originate from the experience of higher education.

A form of social capital includes knowledge of how to navigate the regulatory structure of institutions. First generation college students who do not possess this type of social capital may have difficulty accessing institutional resources and support. Intersecting domains of inequality can cause access to become even more difficult for female first generation students who come from poor to working class backgrounds and/or may be of racial/ethnic minority. These students are challenged to navigate the controlling structure of institutions, which even without deliberate intentions, enforces dominance over others through the white, male, middle-to upper class norm of academia.

I can relate to the experience of not knowing what I was supposed to do or how the bureaucratic processes operated within the university structure. Several respondents

referred to the regulatory processes of the university as being difficult to know and

understand, creating skepticism of the system, as well as those who are supposed to be

working on their behalf:

> From the beginning of my college education until now, there have always been so many things I was supposed to know to do, and at certain times I needed to make this decision or that one; always some process or some hoop to jump through.....it's hard to know how to do all of it, or whether you are doing what you should be doing. I kind of felt like maybe because of my background I didn't get enough guidance... I didn't have much faith in the system.--Paula, white, working class, rural, 20's

> In my educational experience, I have felt in the dark and even lost at times, like I didn't know what form I needed to complete or what step I needed to take......the whole process was not communicated to me. I can't say for sure that it was because of my race, but I have always felt that it may have played a role in it.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> For me, it's like, certain people get chosen for the research projects and stuff, you have to be in the know and it's hard if you don't know how to go about doing that because you have to work or whatever and you're not there. I would like to have been a graduate assistant, but I didn't really know it was an option....no one told me. When I did find out, there were no positions.....well, that's what they said anyway. It seems like I'm always trying to find out what's going on....but I never really know. Like your study, my class, race, being first generation and female might be part of it.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Bourdieu argues that barriers based on race/ethnicity, as well as those based on

gender and class, restricts access to institutional resources (Perna and Titus 2005). As

noted by my respondents above, these barriers are real and can impede students' personal

and academic progress. Respondents were aware of their multiple disadvantages across

race, class, gender and first generation status, as well as the obstacles which may ensue.

There are many unwritten rules and expectations tied to being a graduate student.

First generation students may not know what the rules are and may be unaware of the

expectations based on their lack of social capital. Several respondents expressed

frustration about the ambiguity of expectations within the higher education system,

primarily graduate school:

> I am so frustrated with academia, this idea that we all have to do it all, doesn't make sense to me. I get frustrated with this system.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40s

> At times I have felt like I was supposed to do more, but no one was really telling me what I should be doing and I didn't know what to do. Then I would find out that I should be doing research or writing a journal article or whatever and I didn't have a clue how to go about it. Now I feel like I am behind everyone else. --Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> In graduate school, there is a different set of expectations that aren't really clear and I guess you are supposed to know what those are.....that's been the toughest thing...not having that experience or knowledge and trying to figure it all out...the not knowing. – Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

The institutional climate and regulatory structure of colleges and universities play

a crucial role in fostering or impeding women's personal academic and professional

development (Locks et al. 2008). Results from this study show that regulatory processes

and ambiguous expectations can cause female first generation students to feel less

knowledgeable and a lack of belonging and fit in academia, particularly across the

intersections of race, class and gender.

Institutional climate and structure of colleges and universities aimed toward the

advancement of white men from upper and middle class backgrounds fosters an

environment in which differences are unintentionally amplified instead of lessened (Hall

and Sandler 1984). This "chilly" environment can negatively affect not only women, but

students of racial/ethnic minority or poor to working class background. Previous

research indicates that women perceive the college climate to be chillier than men,

minorities perceived the climate to be chillier than non-minorities, and students who had

been in school longer perceived the climate to be chillier than other students (Morris 2003:17; Janz and Pyke 2000).

These findings support the need to examine student perceptions of institutions across the intersections of race, class, gender and other differences over time. Chavous et al. (2004) suggest a need to 'examine both individual perceptions of institutions as well as institutional structures, instructional practices, policies, and other sources that may convey messages about belonging and fit' (pg. 13).

Summary

In conclusion, an intersectional analysis within the contexts of family and class status, personal expectations, cultural images, and the regulatory structure of institutions indicates that female first generation college students often have a very different educational experience than second and third generation students, characterized by a lack of knowledge both prior to and during college. Explanations of why female first generation college students in this study felt they did not know as much as other students is supported at the intersections of race, class, gender and place within and across the contexts mentioned above**.** Although experiences and perceptions of respondents were varied, there was definitely an awareness of multiple disadvantages from first generation female students who were of racial/ethnic minority, as well as from poor to working class backgrounds.

As a consequence of 'not knowing,' a majority of respondents in this study experienced various impediments to personal and academic progress, as well as systemic isolation, which resulted in increased self-sufficiency and lack of belonging. Taken as a

whole, outcomes of 'not knowing' greatly influenced how first generation female students negotiate their identity within and across contexts.

Chapter Seven will focus on how female first generation students' lack of knowledge can result in further repercussions to the self through the presence of the imposter phenomenon, whether the imposter phenomenon manifests differently across the distinct lenses of race, class, gender and place, and how these repercussions ultimately affect students' identity negotiation.

Chapter Seven

The Imposter Phenomenon

Do you ever have this fear that you don't deserve it? I mean, like you aren't as smart or as good as other students? I always feel like everyone else knows more than me. I will be in class and I'm afraid to say something because they may find out that I really don't know anything.......like, 'why is she here, how did she get through?' It makes me feel anxious and kind of scared....even when I do pretty well, I always think I am going to fail; like someday they will find out the truth and tell me 'you're done.....you're out of here.'--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

The respondents in this study consistently expressed feelings of 'not knowing' prior to and during the college experience. They also emphatically described feeling that others knew what to do and were doing it better. Most first generation female graduate students in this study reported feeling like outsiders in academia, disadvantaged by their lack of knowledge. In addition, many of these women, as reflected in the quote above, reported feeling intellectually inferior to other students, undeserving of success, and fearful of failure. It is important not only to understand how female first generation students' lack of knowledge might lead to imposter feelings, but whether and to what extent intersecting identities influence the presence of imposter phenomenon characteristics.

The Great Pretender

The imposter phenomenon is a term that has been used to characterize intense feelings of "intellectual phoniness," particularly among high achieving women (Clance and Imes 1978:241). Results from the CIPS (Clance 1985), indicate that all but one respondent exhibited characteristics or behaviors associated with the imposter phenomenon. According to Clance (1985), the higher the CIPS score, the more

frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interferes in a person's life. A majority (57%) or 12 of the respondents' scores were in the highest ranges, indicating the experience of frequent and often intense imposter feelings. Of these 12 respondents, 8 were from working class, 2 from lower middle class, and 2 from poor backgrounds; 6 were white and 6 indicated racial identity other than white. Furthermore, 6 of 9 respondents who reported a racial identity other than white indicated experiencing frequent and often intense imposter feelings. Of the 3 remaining racial minority respondents, 2 indicated moderate to frequent imposter feelings. In addition, of the 6 respondents with CIPS scores above 80, all but one was from a rural area.

Women who experience the imposter phenomenon are "unable to internalize a sense of being talented and competent, and instead attribute success to external factors unrelated to ability, such as error or luck" (Clance et al.1995:80; Langford and Clance 1993). Many of these women suffer distress in their lives due to imposter feelings, which ultimately impact how they see themselves and how they believe others see them. Women experiencing imposter feelings often believe they are fooling everyone, and that someday they will eventually be exposed as imposters.

I can relate to feeling like a fraud for most of my college experience. My lack of knowledge and understanding seemed to spiral into persistent feelings of phoniness, like I was just pretending to be like everyone else; not true college material. Even though I believed others knew something I didn't, I felt that if I played the game well enough, I could "pass" for one of them; however, I was always fearful that my cover would be blown and everyone would find out that I was a fake. Of course, I did pass. But despite

getting good grades and two conferred degrees, I could not shake the ever present feeling of being an imposter, which caused me to feel anxious, fearful and isolated.

Clance et al. (1995) discuss how imposters attribute individual success to other factors, like luck or error. Well, I believed both had a lot to do with me being successful. How else could I explain my academic accomplishments when both of my parents failed to graduate from high school and I was the only one of six children to get a college degree? How could I have succeeded? It must be luck, or someone made a mistake and I got through on a technicality. Whatever it was, I felt it didn't have much to do with my ability or talent.

My respondents reiterated many of the same feelings, including attributing their success to luck or error, feeling undeserving of success and fearful of being exposed as a fraud. Below are several excerpts which support the connection we shared as first generation college students experiencing intense imposter feelings:

> Sometimes I sit in class and think.....when is my time up? When is everyone going to realize that I don't belong here, that I am not really graduate school material, heck, I wasn't even really college material. I have this fear that someday it might all go away, like the jig is up, you're done. I can't help but think I've been super lucky, been in the right place at the right time, things like that. Don't get me wrong, I have worked hard, but I keep thinking that it is more than that....it seems so much easier for everyone else. I know other factors are in play, and I have gotten by with it for years. I fear that, like, when are they going to figure it out?--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> It's weird. I could really relate to those questions. Like making people think I am more competent than I really am. Sometimes I am afraid that people will find out that I'm not really that smart, that I shouldn't be here. I worry that my luck will run out you know? I mean I'm not that special, I don't think I know as much as other people and sometimes I feel like I am a fake or something, pretending to be something I'm not. Like why did I get through when so many others didn't? It has to be something more. --Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

It was hard for me to answer those survey questions, like I guess I don't realize my potential. I still think I should be doing better. Even in class, I sit there, it's been like this since (my first college). I feel like, am I the only one struggling? I may not be doing as well as all the others in class.--Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

Yes, that luck thing, have I used up all of the luck allotted in my life? Is it done? I think someone is going to say that to me. It's interesting because I can pinpoint all of the times I got lucky, like I think I am not supposed to be here, how is this happening?" You feel like you should have fortune like qualities, you should have seen this coming.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Wendy continues to express how she "lucked out":

When I do succeed, I feel like I lucked out, if they really would have saw, this should not have been as hard as it was; someone else would have gotten it done way better than this. You still have this feeling that you are not the exception, you are the life rule... that someone is going to catch me, I am going to get busted.

Although my respondents and I shared the connection of being first generation female graduate students experiencing imposter feelings, it is important to understand that we do not share the same position in the social hierarchy. Gender intersects with class to doubly disadvantage first generation college students. All of the respondents quoted above were from poor to working class backgrounds. Additionally, of the twelve respondents who had the highest scores on the CIPS, ten were from poor to working class backgrounds. Many poor to working class students confess that they try to "pass" as middle or upper-class students by not divulging background information and embracing the culture of their fellow students (Granfield 1991; Aries and Seider 2005). Mack (2006) writes that the working class student's struggle to "pass" can lead to living in fear of being unmasked as undeserving (p. 56).

Three of the four respondents quoted above were also of minority racial/ethnic identity. Gender intersects with class and race to triply disadvantage female first generation students from poor to working class backgrounds with a racial/ethnic minority

identity. As mentioned previously, only a few studies have been published regarding racial/ethnic identity and the imposter phenomenon. Research indicates that minority students report higher imposter feelings and participants' racial identity increased imposter feelings (Caselman 2003, Cokley et al. 2013, Craddock et al. 2011).   Research also indicates that women of color may be more intensely affected by impostor feelings because of a double or triple minority status (Clance and Imes 1978; Clance et al.1995), which can make the entire graduate school experience more difficult to navigate.

In this study, CIPS (Clance 1985) scores show that all but one respondent who indicated a primary racial identity other than White reported more intense imposter feelings. In line with previous research, female respondents with a racial/ethnic minority identity in this study were also more severely affected by imposter feelings. Racial/ethnic minority respondents were consistently quoted as saying things like: *"I lucked out;" "I should not be here;" "I am going to get busted;" "other students are much smarter"* and *"more competent;"* and *"I can't help but feel inadequate."*

The intersection of gender, class and race creates a situation of double and triple disadvantage for students, which according to previous literature and respondents in this study, results in increased feelings of fraudulence and fear of being unmasked. Thus, first generation poor to working class female students of racial/ethnic minority are at higher risk for developing characteristics of the imposter phenomenon that can more profoundly affect their identity, and in a larger sense, their overall well-being.

My Own Worst Critic

Characteristics of the imposter phenomenon include comparing self to others and being overly critical of self. The constant comparisons and criticisms serve to perpetuate

feelings of being an imposter. Research suggests that "females tend to be more self-critical and to have more of ruminative coping style than males" (Neff 2003:94). Even females who are academically gifted are more self-critical of their abilities (Gentile et al. 2009:36). Additionally, when women outperform men, their self-esteem does not increase (Gentile et al. 2009:36).

Female graduate students may also be at a higher risk for self-criticism and doubt. Research indicates that "belonging, uncertainty and self-doubt are likely to be potent in early stages of academic or professional development when transitioning from one developmental stage to another, such as graduate school" (Dasgupta 2011:233). Thus, the increased pressure and expectations of graduate school may aggravate women's criticalness of self, increasing feelings of doubt and fraudulence.

Women who struggle with imposter feelings tend to remember the incidents where they did not do well and pay very little attention to the times they were successful. These women struggle with accepting compliments and repeatedly minimize their accomplishments. They often set themselves up to fail, anxiously worrying about succeeding even when others think they will do well or they have done well before. Many women experiencing imposter feelings continually procrastinate or overwork, which causes even more stress.

The research process has allowed me to identify characteristics of the imposter phenomenon in myself, as well as in other women. I have always been very critical of myself and eager to point out all of the things I did wrong, failing to recognize any of the things I did right. I regularly compare myself to other students and constantly think they

are doing it better. As I listened to these other women, I learned that they too were their

own worst critic, even using similar language to describe their thoughts and behaviors:

> They (professors) think I am going to do better than I am, I don't think it is possible to do as well as they expect. I am really hard on myself, my own worst critic.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

> I am really hard on myself, especially academically overly critical. I get really frustrated with myself when I don't do well. I beat myself up a little bit, it's not because I blame the class or my professor, it's my fault. I am a self-blamer. I think I set too high standards. I related to a lot of the questions on the survey, for me, I still have that fear that I won't do it very well this time. I think it's because I place it on myself and there was a time that I didn't think I belonged.--Olivia, White working class, rural, 20's

> I filled out your survey and I thought, I don't have the self-esteem I should have. I am my own worst critic..... when I do well, I still question whether I can do that well next time. When I don't do well, I'm embarrassed and frustrated and feel like I let other people down and I should have done better. You would think I would escape that, I still feel it could come crashing down, I am very hard on myself. Even like when we are having a discussion, I think to myself, don't say that, it might make the teacher feel like..... why is she in the program?--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40s

One respondent not only criticized herself, but went further to describe how she

felt other students outperformed her in various ways:

> When I look at the work of other graduate students in the department, I can't help but feel inadequate. It always seems that other graduate students are more prepared, committed, and at ease with the work put in front of them. The other students always seem to catch on to concepts and ideas before I do. Their work and projects are usually so far beyond anything I could even think of doing. This feels like what I am supposed to be doing, and weirdly it is one day I will be better at this though. I have been doing this forever, but I'm still not.... I still could be doing it way better. Especially seeing how easy things seem to come to colleagues, other students, even undergrads, it seems to come so much easier, it looks like it does and I talk myself into 'oh it's just easier for them because…' and you justify all the reasons why they are doing better or it seems they are doing better or it comes easier to them--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Interestingly, all of the respondents quoted above were from working class

backgrounds, and all but one was from a racial identity other than white. This again

highlights the strong intensity of imposter feelings for female first generation students across the intersections of race and class.

Women with imposter feelings often struggle with accepting compliments. As far as compliments go, I have always been uncomfortable with them. I know it is quite common for people to have some difficulty accepting compliments, mostly because they do not want to appear arrogant or come off as having a large ego. My discomfort was different. I used to think it was because I was raised to be humble, but now I know it was because deep down I never believed that the compliments were true. I wasn't just pretending to be modest; I truly felt that I was an imposter and the compliments were all part of the deception. Below are excerpts from respondents which help support my point:

> The criticisms are always easier to remember, the compliments are hard to deal with and you take them as being insincere, the criticisms are easier to believe. Easier to deal with, what's the downside, if I fail and do horrible, then I am prepared for that. For people who are always thinking that the rug might be pulled out, I will pull it out myself and then I can use the rug as a parachute and I can float with it, do it myself and then it will be easier.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

> I really struggle with accepting compliments. I know people mean well, but I hate it when they say things about me that I don't believe are true. I'm not just brushing it off because I don't want them to think I have a big head....I really don't think I am that smart and it kind of makes me laugh when people say things like that to me. Like, if they only knew.....--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> I hate it when people give me a compliment and then tell me to just accept it instead of automatically rejecting it. What they don't understand is that it is so hard for me to handle people telling me that I'm great or whatever. I mean, it's not because I want people to think I am so humble and stuff, it's really that I don't feel that I measure up and I'm not this intellectual person they think I am. I sometimes think they already know that and they are just setting me up....waiting to see when the real me comes out...then it will be like, game over. –Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> Sometimes students and professors will give me compliments and I just don't take them seriously. I feel like they are just saying it to be nice or maybe because they think I need to hear it. I have a problem with thinking people are insincere because I don't think I am good enough.—Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

Three of the four respondents quoted above were of racial/ethnic minority, and all were from poor to working class backgrounds, which continue to illustrate how race and class influence the presence, and more importantly, the severity of imposter phenomenon characteristics.

Minimizing academic accomplishments allows women to appear more relatable and less like they are bragging, especially if it is around family and friends who did not go to college. Gender socialization may also play a part in that women are socialized to downplay their intelligence and accomplishments. Respondents in my study also shared how they often minimize their academic accomplishments, which is another characteristic of the imposter phenomenon:

> I actually won an award and at the time I thought the department was messing with me, I remember I was nervous about telling anyone else before the actual ceremony, like it wasn't going to happen. --Phoebe, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> When I get a good grade or maybe do something really well, I don't tell people about it, even if they ask. I don't want to toot my own horn, you know?--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I downplay my successes just because I don't know ...like I said, I am critical of myself, especially academically over critical.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

In addition to minimizing my own accomplishments, I have always been extremely nervous and fearful prior to taking an exam or completing a project. It did not matter that I earned good grades and had been repeatedly successful. It did not matter that people told me I would do well and that they believed in me. I did not believe in myself. In my mind, I was an imposter that at any given time could be unmasked.

According to my respondents, a majority of these women also felt the same way. The following excerpt seems to sum it up:

> I identified with the survey question if you do something well, someone expects you to do well again and you're afraid you might not do it. I feel like I have succeeded before and then they expect me to succeed at it again, and I'm like oh my gosh it could have been the moment and I don't necessarily accredit it with myself, my working. I worry about succeeding on a project when others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well and I tend to remember incidents where I have not done my best.....that's the worst.—Brooke, White, middle class, rural, 20's

Despite receiving compliments, good grades, and other accolades, respondents continued to have little faith in their own abilities and talents.

Always On the Treadmill

Procrastination and overworking are interesting dichotomies of the imposter phenomenon. I find it a bit odd that I have always procrastinated, given how fearful I was of doing poorly. At the other extreme, I have dug my heels in and worked long and hard on certain projects or papers, way more than what was required. When I began this research and found that both were characteristics of the imposter phenomenon, I was curious as to whether and to what extent other women experienced it. In the interview sample, several women reported either working extremely hard or procrastinating on a regular basis and discussed how anxious and stressed it made them.

Clance (1985) says that imposters engage in a "treadmill experience", where they feel pressure to perform and then experience anxiety, self-doubt, and fear (p. 51). The response is to either engage in intense, sustained work or procrastinate; both of which cause stress. Even if the end result is success, imposters do not experience it that way and the cycle is repeated the next time they must perform.

I can relate to being on a treadmill, always fearful of falling off the end, but continuing to behave in ways that put me at the edge. Through my respondents' words, I found out that I was not on the treadmill alone:

It's about preparation; you are always on the treadmill.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Similar to what Clance (1985) indicated, several respondents engaged in a "treadmill experience" characterized by procrastination, causing stress and fear of failure:

I get really stressed out. I tend to procrastinate, and I've always put pressure on myself, it adds more stress, even though I have always done well in school, I always worry this might be the time I do bad, get kicked out of the program, ruin my GPA.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

I always feel like I am at the verge of failing, of not completing a course, of not advancing toward my degree. I set myself up for it most of the time, I mean, I cause more stress for myself because I procrastinate a lot and I also have a hard time asking questions that would help make me less nervous. It's like I constantly feel the pressure and I don't know how to deal with it.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

I think I set myself up sometimes that I don't do so well because I procrastinate, I don't spend enough time on it. With all the papers and stuff I am so nervous that I am going to do terrible, but I never do as badly as I think. I don't like it when people read my paper, because I am afraid they will think I'm bad, I'm worse than I probably am. I compare myself too much and I do get nervous about that, I have a tendency to not even have time for them to look at it.--Phoebe, White, middle class, rural, 20's

Another respondent engaged in overworking as part of a "treadmill experience," resulting in anxiety and self-doubt:

When I have a project or paper due, or an exam, I go into overdrive. I feel like I need to study every moment of the day and the stress is overwhelming. It never changes. Even if I do well on a test or get a good grade on a paper, I always get that sick feeling that I will not do well and it drives me to work even harder. You'd think this feeling would go away, but it is always there. Sometimes I feel like something is wrong with me. Maybe it is just that deep down I don't believe in myself.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Additionally, one respondent described a "treadmill experience" characterized by a cycle of procrastination and overworking:

> It's weird. Sometimes I take on an assignment or project and work on it for hours and hours, almost too much, like over scrutinizing. But other times I wait until the last minute, until my back is up against the wall and then I study or get the paper done. I'm not sure why I do this, but I keep doing it.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

As evidenced by the excerpts above, my respondents and I shared similar experiences of imposter feelings and characteristics. It is important to emphasize these connections so that others who may also be experiencing the very same things might feel less alone.

Throughout the interviews, respondents who were of racial/ethnic minority described experiencing more intense imposter feelings and repercussions than white respondents. These respondents were also aware of being disadvantaged by both race and class, and thought others might know more because of their privileged positions:

> I am very hard on myself when I do not do as well as I like on an assignment and/or class. If I do not receive an A grade I always feel I could have done better by working harder. It does push me to work harder the next time but sometimes "life" gets in the way of that. Sometimes I struggle with wondering if the other students in the class(es) are smarter than me due to the schools they went to growing up, their SES background, race, what have you.—Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> I wonder whether people realize they are privileged because of their race, class or whatever. Like students who are white, have money, parents who went to school, connections and support. Do they understand other people's struggles to be on their level? Not that I necessarily want to live their life, I just want to feel like I know just as much as they do, feel as confident.—Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

The quotes above provide examples of how race, class, and gender interlock to form a "matrix of domination," which interweaves structures of domination with

structures of privilege, resulting in some people being disadvantaged by these systems, while others are privileged at their expense (Collins 2000; Fuller 2004).

Gender seemed to be less of a disadvantage to most of the racial/ethnic minority respondents in this sample. However, one respondent expressed how being female was oppressive in both her familial and academic experiences. Another racial/ethnic minority respondent felt gender mainly hindered in academia, which I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter Eight. The influence of place on imposter feelings was difficult to assess, as the majority (15) of respondents were from rural areas, and none of the respondents directly indicated place in relation to imposter feelings. However, quantitative data indicate that lower population was associated with higher CIPS scores. Chapter Eight will further discuss the effects of rurality in this study.

Summary

Through my words and the words of my female first generation respondents, I discovered that the imposter phenomenon strongly interconnects with the theme of *not knowing* and *others know more*. Almost every woman could identify with some characteristic of the imposter phenomenon; but more importantly, a majority identified with multiple, intense imposter feelings, primarily those from poor to working class backgrounds and those with a racial/ethnic minority identity.

Jones (2003) points out that "growing up working class can produce an insidious sense of inferiority as members learn their lower-ranked position through cultural images, class stereotypes, and interactions with teachers and other authorities" (p. 804). Mack (2006) stresses the importance of viewing class identity as a "multiply conflicted

development process" which may cause specific problems for poor to working class students negotiating identity in a middle class academic world (p. 59).

Research has shown that women of color may be more intensely affected by impostor feelings because of a double or triple minority status (Clance and Imes 1978; Clance et al. 1995). Clance (1985) also suggests that experiencing imposter feelings may actually help women of color feel less differentiated from their family and community, and that rejection or separation from community may be a factor in the origin or continuation of imposter feelings.

Overall, the imposter phenomenon did manifest differently across the distinct lenses of intersectionality in this sample of female first generation graduate students. Class and race/ethnicity were the most significant disparities, resulting in a larger and more intense presence of imposter characteristics. Gender and place were not as significant in terms of influencing imposter feelings and characteristics.

Imposter feelings caused respondents to believe they could be exposed as frauds at any time; as if what they didn't know was eventually going to catch up with them and possibly get them removed from college or prohibit them from completing their degree. Repercussions for the respondents included fear, anxiety, stress, self-criticism and self-doubt, as well as a continual cycle of procrastination and overworking. These repercussions contribute to the systemic isolation and lack of belonging which was described in Chapter Six, as well as increased self-reliance stemming from feelings of inferiority and fraudulence.

Respondents in this study have described experiencing a lack of knowledge and imposter feelings which interfered with their lives in very real ways. This lack of

knowledge combined with the presence of imposter characteristics across the intersections of race, class, gender and place greatly influences how first generation female students negotiate their identities, how they view themselves in relation to the world and ultimately, who they are as people.

Chapter Eight will focus on how first generation female graduate students adapt to the challenges of 'not knowing' and feeling like an imposter, including the process of identity negotiation and adaptation within the contexts of home and academia, as well as implications for success.

Chapter Eight

Straddling Two Worlds

I never really realized I act differently around my family, but I do it all the time. I was the first person to graduate from college, going to graduate school now, and it is stressful and weird. I am treated differently. They don't know how to deal with me, I don't want them to feel that I am better than them or think that I am better than them....sometimes you have to restrain your excitement about what you're doing and that is not fun. Sometimes I feel like I can't really be who I want to be--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

As evidenced in the previous two chapters, the lack of knowledge many first generation students experience prior to and during college can make an impact by impeding personal and academic progress and causing systemic isolation, as well as fostering self-reliance. The feelings of 'not knowing' and 'others know more' often manifest into imposter feelings, which may cause persistent anxiety, fear, and distress, as well as procrastination and overworking; impacting student progress, increasing isolation, and further promoting self-reliance.

These repercussions, within the context and the self, greatly influence how respondents negotiate identity across the intersections of race, class, gender, and place. As the quote above illustrates, first generation students often have difficulty balancing who they are with who they are supposed to be. It is important to identify how students are able to negotiate multiple identities despite these difficulties, emphasizing adaptation within home and academic environments, as well as implications for success.

Code Switching

Previous research has pointed out that first generation college students often employ "code switching;" which is acting one way at home and another way at school, to

try and belong in both places (Aries and Seider 2005). In some ways, all of us probably engage in code switching at one time or another to try and fit in or meet people on their own level, whatever that may be. But for first generation college students, code switching is much more profound. It is a constant balancing act between home and academia; a struggle to belong in both worlds by preserving each identity.

The intersection of class and place influences code switching among first generation college students. Poor to working class first generation students may face "conflicting class loyalties" and feel "nowhere at home" (Jones 2003:804). These students may feel forced to cut themselves off from their family, friends, and way of life back home in order to adopt a new identity or they may be rejected by their family and friends for leaving home to pursue an education.

For example, when I go back home, I don't necessarily feel rejected, but I don't feel accepted either. Initially, I am in this sort of limbo; not really fitting in but feeling pressured to do so. It is then that I engage in code switching. I am certainly not going to start discussing my dissertation topic or specific sociological theories with my family. They don't care about it and would probably just tune me out or may even become offended, like I was "too smart" for them now. I feel forced to revert back to the "old Nicole," my identity before college, a person they can relate to and understand.

Code switching also happens when I spend time with friends who did not go to college. Even if they ask, I feel like I should not talk to them about my academic life or anything that pertains to it. I don't want to appear "snobby" or "uppity" and fear that they will think of me in that way or that I am somehow better than them. On the rare occasion that I let something slip, they often zone out or change the subject, which tells

me that I need to get back to being the "old Nicole." Sometimes it doesn't even matter that I code switch; others instinctively resent me for going to college.

Most of the first generation college students in this study engaged in code switching because they did not want to be seen as a "know it all," "snobby" or "better than" their family and friends. As mentioned previously, women are also more inclined to minimize their accomplishments because of gender socialization. Code switching provides a way to adapt to the changes in cultures, as well as stick to prescribed gendered behavior, without completely losing each identity. Nevertheless, several respondents reported experiencing rejection and resentment regardless of their behavior. These experiences not only put pressure on students to hide parts of their identity, but also further isolate them from family and friends:

> I really try to shed that professional identity – I don't want to be Dr. ...... right now, I guess I didn't want to come off like a snob, I don't want people to think I'm snotty.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

> With my family, I feel like I, not to be mean, but I feel like I have to "dummy down" cause I don't want to be looked at like a know it all.--Brooke, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> With friends from high school that didn't do any kind of higher education I feel like I can't really say what I am doing, almost because I don't want them to think I am better than them, I have to watch what I say or if I say what I am doing they get confused, if friends say what are you doing, they look at you weird, like I don't think this puts me on a higher platform than everyone else, but that's how I feel people put me.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I definitely act one way at school and another way at home. I feel like I am two different people depending upon where I am. When I'm at home, I know I have to be aware and meet my family at their level...I'm not going to go on about what I am studying and stuff that they can't relate to. I just keep it simple and be who they expect me to be.....as if I never left.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

With my friends back home, it's a different thing altogether. I find it hard to communicate with those people, they don't have this thirst for knowledge, it is more practical. Most of my friends don't get my desire for this or why I would want to be in a lab all day, or why I would want to write a book. I feel like its bragging or something. I don't want to, it's hard to explain, don't want to sound like I know everything. I don't talk about my work at all.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

Race intersects with class to affect some racial/ethnic minority female first generation students even more deeply. Not only do these students have to deal with people back home feeling like they are "acting above their class," but they must also negotiate how they may be perceived to be "acting more like a white person." Several racial/ethnic minority respondents reported having to deal with both class and race issues at home:

There is a kind of resentment with some people back home on the reservation..... the tone changes, more curt than it used to be. Talking about whatever life issues they are having, and then they say, 'as if you ever get it; you are off in your ivory tower,' as if where we go to is a world away.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

In my mom's family, education was looked down upon, for them it was like: 'Well now that you are a college grad, you think you know everything about our lives, don't you?' So, it was pure rejection, absolute, pure rejection.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

Well it's a catch 22, I never left the reservation for that reason, I didn't want them to say, 'oh she left and came back and now she thinks she is better than us.' There is that where people think we think we are higher than other people because we are educated.--Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

When I go back home, it's almost like I am viewed as a traitor; like I went off to college so that I could live more like a white person, move up in the world, better myself....they think I am rejecting my race, culture, way of life. I'm not trying to do that.....I want to have both.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

As evidenced by my respondents, female first generation students often have much difficulty trying to adapt to college life and a new culture, while at the same time

trying to preserve the connection with family and friends back home. Code switching is one way students can straddle both worlds and maintain both parts of their identity. However, for some, the repercussions of leaving home to pursue higher education are more severe; resulting in rejection rooted in perceived class and racial differences.

Respondents reported engaging in code switching both at home and in academia. Most felt it was something they needed to do in order to stay connected and accepted by family and friends back home. However, some respondents felt like they couldn't really be who they wanted to be for fear of being rejected or viewed as acting above their class or different from their race. Many respondents had difficulty trying to incorporate parts of their home identity with their academic one; some, because of rejection, felt forced to adopt a new identity altogether.

Resident Expert

Ironically, despite the sort of ostracizing and unaccepting behavior of family and friends, many first generation students are often considered to be the "resident expert." For example, when someone back home needs legal advice, they contact me. I did not go to law school; however, they assume that because I am educated, I must be able to provide advisement on all matters. Most of the time the questions they want answered involve everything but my actual field of study. Many respondents also reported feeling like the "resident expert" among their family and friends back home:

> My family actually utilizes my education. They fully do. I try and make it the best
> for my family. They think I am a registered dietician and I'm not, but I am the
> educated one, a lot of them will be like, help me lose weight or whatever.
> Everybody thinks I went for nutrition; but it is mostly exercise science.--Isabel, White,
> middle class, urban, 20's

> Because I am the only one that went to college, it feels like my family and my friends look to me to give them information, but not just any information, only the stuff that they feel is important or can benefit them. It's usually when they are in trouble for something or they want to know if they can get a certain tax deduction or whatever. Like, I have no clue about that stuff....they think that I should know everything because I am in graduate school. Now I am the expert on everything. I am who they will all call.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

According to respondents, the role of "resident expert" is anti-intellectual; family and friends want practical advice, not scholarly wisdom. This has been my experience as well. Family and friends prefer that I provide some type of practical knowledge or resolution; theoretical or intellectual thought does not count.

Respondents also reported feeling a responsibility to their families and friends back home to provide this type of practical knowledge, even though they may have to seek it out in other ways. Additionally, the expectation to be the "expert" often caused increased pressure and stress:

> It's kind of strange for me because my family just assumes that I know things I don't know, like just because I went to school I should have all the answers. Sometimes I feel like they only want to talk to me when I can help them, or they think I can help them. And they ask questions about stuff that is not even what I am going to school for.....like a PhD is the same as an MD. It's not even close. But I feel like I should give them an answer, like that is my responsibility because I went to school and I should be able to at least do that much for them.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> I do get treated differently by people back home ever since I went to college. Like my family will look to me to help them by telling them what to do, where to go, how to do stuff. They look to me for answers to questions that I may know nothing about. The weird thing is that I find myself googling stuff or asking other people just so I can give them an answer. I don't want to tell them I don't know because at least they are reaching out to me and the expectation is that I should know this because I am in graduate school. It's a lot of pressure though and sometimes it is upsetting and stressful.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

Although the role of "resident expert" puts added pressure and stress on students who are trying to balance home and academic responsibilities; some see it as a way to

stay connected to their families and give back, especially for those who may have increased cultural and familial expectations and responsibilities because of their racial/ethnic minority identities.   While the role of 'resident expert' may not advocate support for intellectual pursuits, it can provide first generation female students a way to lessen some of the guilt, decrease isolation, and successfully keep one foot in both worlds.

Interestingly, one respondent identified with being the "resident expert" among people on her reservation; however, it was a different type of treatment from those in the nearby community. To them, education did not make her an expert; she was merely at their level now that she "overcame" perceived "obstacles" of reservation life:

> With some of the people, on the reservation, they assume I know what I am talking about, I am the expert almost on everything. I am the resident expert on everything. But within the community itself outside of the reservation, it is sort of like, you are a novelty that has overcome the reservation, the obstacle, you did it, like you understand us now. Really? You never left this community but now I am on your level? Which is weird, but we don't really position ourselves any differently but I see the shift with other people.—Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Wendy's description illustrates the way social identities are constructed by society for stratification purposes and often are ascribed, such as race/ethnicity, class, or gender. Encountering these types of situations at home and in the community, seeing the "shifts" in other people, may subject students to a great deal of identity negotiation. In this sense, they must balance who they are with who they are supposed to be.

Who Am I and Who Am I Supposed to Be?

Yuval-Davis (2006) states that identities are "individual and collective narratives that answer the question 'who am/are I/we?" (p. 197). Other researchers refer to identity as the "personally held beliefs about the self in relation to social groups, such as race,

class, gender, and the ways one expresses that relationship" (Torres et al. 2009:577). Thus, to answer the question "Who am I?" we must consider not only how we view our "self" across the intersections of race, class, gender, and place, and in varying contexts during interactions and relationships with others, but also how others view us along those same lines.

It seems that I am continually negotiating my identity. When I return to school and professional work, I am no longer the "old Nicole," or the "resident expert" I was at home. At least in my mind, I switch back to my professional/academic identity. Still, the academic part feels like it does not quite fit; I am in the same kind of limbo as back home; not really fitting in but feeling pressure to do so. As mentioned previously, first generation students are often required to "straddle different cultures" (Frye et al. 2005:2), negotiating their identity along the lines of race, class, gender and place. During the course of the interviews for this study, almost all of the first generation female graduate students identified with the challenge of straddling two worlds, that of home and academia, and how it impacted their identity in significant ways.

First generation female respondents were challenged to acknowledge multiple identities within the contexts of home and academia; develop an awareness of disadvantages across the intersections of race, class, gender, and place; and ultimately adapt to both worlds in order to achieve success.

Adaptation

First Generation Status

Respondents in my study shared how being first generation college students contributed to a lack of knowledge and a feeling that other students knew more. Because

respondents' parents did not go to college, they were not able to receive the kind of direction and advice that other students whose parents went to college received. This lack of parental knowledge and experience of academia directly impacted respondents' personal and academic progress, resulting in delays in degree completion, less financial aid, and conflict due to role reversal, while contributing to systemic isolation, lack of belonging and increased self-reliance.

Despite the consequences of 'not knowing,' respondents were able to obtain the knowledge necessary to gain acceptance and persist in college. The quotes below provide examples of how they were able to do so:

My mom met this guy who suggested [college], walked me through the process, set up interviews for me, if my mom had not happened upon this guy, I wouldn't know. I didn't understand how it worked, the essay portion, having that guy and his daughter walk me through. I don't know if I wouldn't have made it to college because my parents didn't have that experience.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

For the most part, once I got started people put me in contact with others. When I started here, I was part of the TRIO program and they were really helpful.--Rose, White, lower middle class, urban, 20's

The pediatrician I worked for, I truly think this turned my life around. He became the father I never had. He kept telling me, you are smart, you need to go to college, you need to do it. He kind of adopted me. I truly believe that without that role model [the pediatrician] I wouldn't have the self-confidence to go on. I would have said, no I don't deserve better, I came from white trash, I deserve white trash.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

My aunties were my role models, they were still going to school when I was growing up, they are all educated....known on our reservation, being all women, as the 'doctors.' I also followed my sister's steps. I had her to help me. She had some tricks of the trade she would give me, about how to do things. She was the only one who helped me in that sense. --Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

My parents didn't really know much about the system, my older sister was first, it helped having her go first. Maybe they would have given me more advice about how to

go about college if they would have gone, but thankfully I had my sister--Whitney, White, middle class, rural, 20's

Our high school kind of helped prepare me for college, even though it was small. The community gave first year scholarships, helped you for your first year, it was very supportive--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

With that [institution] support internally made it a lot easier for the paperwork and stuff. Then, college advisors were like, 'this is what you have to do,' and the Dean of Ag Engineering said 'let me help you fill this out.' I also had a great high school counselor.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

Some first generation respondents were able to obtain support and assistance from siblings, mentors, teachers, adult connections, institutional representatives, school, community, counselors and family role models. Respondents who did not have this kind of support had to adapt by figuring things out on their own. Some respondents were able to do what was needed to get accepted and to persist in academia without the knowledge and support from others:

Nobody could really just tell me what to do. A lot of things having to do with higher academia I had to figure out all by myself. But I'd say overall, some of it was pretty confusing when I was trying to go to college.--Isabel, White, middle class, urban, 20's

I made my own decisions myself and figured it out on my own because my parents didn't go to college.--Ivy, White, poor, rural, 40's

I guess I just figured out what to do. I didn't ask anyone for help....didn't know   who to ask anyway. It wasn't easy, all of the stuff to know, deadlines, etc. Then once you get in, all of the things to be aware of and have to learn how to do. It's overwhelming when you have to search for the answers yourself.--Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 20's

I can relate to the respondents above because I didn't ask anyone for help and also figured out what to do on my own. I too felt overwhelmed and confused at times, but was able to do what was necessary to get accepted and persist through college. One

respondent mentioned how things were difficult at first, but improved once she figured

out how to establish connections with teachers:

> I did at first get a little swallowed up I admit; I had to find out how to do it and figure that out and figure out that professors aren't scary uncaring doctorate people who are in the ivory tower. I had to figure that out, but once I did, I connected with them (the teachers) ...it opened the door to make it a lot better.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

The lack of knowledge my respondents experienced as first generation students

impacted them in various ways. For some, it caused them to seek out other support and

sources of knowledge; for others, it made them even more determined to figure it out on

their own. Whatever the case, these respondents were able to adapt in ways that allowed

them to be successful.

Class

Many first generation college students are also from poor to working class

backgrounds. First generation status often intersects with class to further disadvantage

students. Research shows that a higher level of socioeconomic status positively impacts

academic and social integration (Ishitani 2006:863). For poor to working class first

generation students, high financial and personal costs coupled with institutional barriers

can work to prevent integration and promote isolation (Reay 2003). Findings from

Chapter Six show that a lack of financial and/or emotional support, values, definitions of

work, and role expectations within the context of family and class status can cause

repercussions for female first generation students; impeding personal and academic

progress, as well as increasing isolation and self-sufficiency.

Financing a college education is a challenge for most poor to working class first

generation students. Most of the respondents in my study reported obtaining federal

financial aid, scholarships and grants, as well as work study and graduate assistantships to help pay the costs of tuition and fees, as well as the cost of living. I also utilized as much federal financial aid as I could get to help pay for college. As mentioned previously, most of the respondents (myself included) also had some type of supplemental income in the form of a full-time or part-time job.

Only five of my respondents received any type of financial assistance from parents or family members, and all five supplemented the financial help with graduate assistantships, scholarships, loans, grants and jobs. As expected, four out of the five respondents receiving financial assistance from family were from middle class backgrounds. Conversely, one international respondent came from a very poor socioeconomic background; however, her parents helped pay her undergraduate tuition by borrowing money from other family and friends, with the cultural expectation that she will pay back the debt. Sixteen out of 21 respondents reported receiving no financial support from parents or family members to pay for college.

Respondents from poor to working class backgrounds were able to overcome socioeconomic obstacles in order to pursue higher education; however, this does not mean that class disparities ended when they entered college. It is important to note that social class not only influences students from a financial perspective, but also shapes the networks of relationships between families, individuals, and institutions.

Although obtaining financial support for college is challenging and often very stressful, the most difficult part for many poor to working class first generation students is trying to assimilate to the middle class academic world; accruing enough social capital to navigate the mobility process, while balancing academic and home identities.

For example, professors and others in academia emphasize the value of learning opportunities, internships, and various unpaid activities as being crucial to college success. Conversely, parents, family and friends back home may emphasize the value and necessity of paid work and on the job training. As mentioned in Chapter Six, working class families often endorse the value of 'real' work, which has a wage attached and sense of purpose and practicality.

Furthermore, professionals in academia foster a culture which places high value on intellectual knowledge and growth, while people at home might advocate a culture which places high value on practical knowledge, experience, and "street smarts." This is an example of how differences in class values can promote conflict between students and families, which may result in a lack of support. Advancement in higher education often means making changes in social contexts and supports (Nelson et. al 2006). Many first generation poor to working class students struggle with disconnecting from their pasts, as well as belonging to their current and future middle to upper class world:

> I want to have a better life than my parents did. I don't want to struggle that much. It's hard because the goal is to move up the ladder...social class....whatever you want to call it, but at the same time I feel like I should remember where I came from and not want to change so much that I am somebody else, you know?—Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> Sure, I want to be successful and make more money than my parents did, but I won't be one of those hoity toity people....the middle or upper class intellectuals who feel they are superior. That will never be me.—Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I think it bothered me that I was that poor; money was a motivator for me. I wanted more than what I had growing up, I wanted to give my kids more, but I always considered myself a person of all classes. I still consider myself that way. I think it made me who I am today, knowing that I didn't have things I wasn't snobbish, but knowing I was capable if I had the right opportunities.—Ivy, White, poor, rural, 40's

Adapting to a middle class academic world is challenging for most poor to working class first generation students. Although students strive to be upwardly mobile, many feel conflicted as to which identity they should assume in the process, as some respondents stated above, because they do not want to lose who they are and may even reject the perceived identity and expectations of middle and upper class academia.

Growing up poor or working class often produces long-lasting identity conflicts (Jones 1998; Lawler 1999). As shown in this study, family socioeconomic and class issues affected first generation female respondents in lasting ways. Despite these repercussions, respondents from poor and working class backgrounds have been able to adapt and become successful in academia. Most respondents did so by incorporating their past with their present worlds, including the values, skills and experiences gained from their families, as well as the self-sufficiency that resulted from growing up with poor to working class identities:

> Through all of my education, I have tried to grow and change, but also preserve the part of me, where I come from. I don't forget about that. I don't feel I have to wow people with my vocabulary or act more like an intellectual. I still talk to people the way I always have...I may think a little differently now, but it's still me.—Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 20's

> I appreciate that about my background. It's been tough...... but it really makes you appreciate who you are. Gives you that sense of reason, you can think through things. No one is doing it for you.—Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I'm trying to maintain a sense of personal equilibrium by making sure I'm not using someone for my own personal gain while still progressing professionally and academically.—Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

> Growing up working class and putting myself through school has helped me to be strong and able to do things all on my own. And even though I may get treated differently and feel like an outsider, I still try to stay connected to my family, while

staying true to myself and my own values. --Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

Conversely, one respondent from a poor socioeconomic background refused to maintain connections with family, feeling she needed to cut ties with her past in order to adapt and succeed both personally and professionally:

> I moved out when I was 15. I haven't had any contact other than word of mouth since I was a teenager. I've had to protect myself, education was looked down upon in my family.....so now I'm the rich snob who knows it all.—Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

Socioeconomic or class status impacts the first generation college student in a myriad of ways. Financial hardships cause more stress and pressure for students from poor to working class backgrounds trying to pay for college and support themselves. However, class influences go beyond money to include the transmission of values, beliefs, and culture. Despite a lack of social capital, many respondents from poor to working class backgrounds were able to access institutional resources, make their own connections and develop support networks to help them navigate the college experience successfully.

Place

Students' identity is influenced by class or socioeconomic status, as well as the environment, or place, in which they grew up. In this study, a majority of the respondents were from rural areas which created certain advantages, such as instilling a strong work ethic, family values and unique way of life;

> I try to be an honest person; my family has instilled a work ethic that I try to use. I grew up on a farm; my parents were very hard working. Living in a rural area has just made me appreciate the area, the land, the animals and it has really affected how I treat others –Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

I learned to be hard working from living on a farm. It was a different way of life, but it taught me a lot.—Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

I like where I came from for the most part, the ruralness was nice because you know everyone, everyone kind of helps. I like that sense of community..you grew up and teachers all know your name, your family, where you are going, etc. it kind of gave you a support and felt more special...you do it better and gain more from it because they care.—Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

Coming from a small town growing up on a farm, I didn't think it was anything special but once I got into the big city and tell people I grew up on a farm, they were fascinated. I now value that part of my life where growing up I didn't so much.—Whitney, White, middle class, rural, 20's

as well as certain disadvantages, such as lack of exposure, diversity, and isolation:

Growing up in a rural area, I almost felt it was a disadvantage. We were 20 miles from town and I wasn't exposed to a lot of other fields or things that I could do growing up. Living in this area, I've traveled a bit but still have not experienced working with a lot of different cultures.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

My family is pretty big and they all reside around my small town. I always felt I really needed to work hard so I could differentiate myself. That influenced why I wanted to come here, to get away.--Brooke, White, middle class, rural, 20's

Basically we never left the farm. I had no social life. I was amazed when I went to school, like where did all these kids come from? That's partly why I identify with animals too. I grew up with them, I was very socially isolated outside of school.--Josie, White, poor, rural, 50's

Despite these disadvantages, respondents were able to utilize the strengths of living in rural areas in order to adapt to college life and be successful. Having a "hard work ethic" was very prevalent among the rural respondents and was the most significant benefit overall. My experience growing up on a farm in a very rural area was similar to the respondents' experiences: a negotiation of the benefits of strong family values and hard work ethic versus the lack of diversity and isolation. However, the college

experience was able to assist me and other rural first generation respondents in becoming more open to other cultures, people, and fields of study.

As stated previously, research has established that rural spaces are gendered; men and women do not hold the same positions or engage in the same kinds of tasks in rural areas (Bryant and Pini 2009; Pini 2006, 2007). Rural places have been characterized by a gendered division of labor and long-standing patriarchal traditions and role expectations.

As I mentioned in Chapter Six, my family was very traditional with respect to gender roles and expectations. Respondents from rural areas also more heavily identified with traditional familial gender roles and expectations, which resulted in separation and isolation on various levels:

> My parents were traditional and the boys and girls did not do the same things. I had to cook and clean, do chores around the house and my brothers worked outside and stuff. It was always separate work and activities too. I didn't get asked to go hunting, fishing and things.—Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

> I remember my mom always telling me to ask my dad for permission to do stuff. They were pretty traditional I guess. Mom and I did things together and my dad did things with my brother. Mom and I did the housework and they did the outside work. I didn't feel like I had a choice as far as work goes. I always wanted to drive the tractor but never got to.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> Well, it was pretty much women who did the cooking and the cleaning. Dad wouldn't do much until after the divorce, then dad really stepped up. That might be the root of my parents' divorce... how my dad's mom would baby my dad or give him things and not others. A lot of things could have been prevented because of those gender roles.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

Denise goes on to describe traditional gender roles in her family:

> My brother would be out in the shop helping dad. My brother and my dad had the hunting, fishing and shop stuff, so we were very separated.

Although rural respondents experienced both separation and isolation because of their familial experiences with gender; many were able to draw on those experiences and become more educated and aware of gendered behavior while in college; questioning gender roles in their personal relationships, as well as their own identity:

> Even though I grew up on a farm with very traditional parents, I don't want that for myself; I can respect it, but I don't have to live that way.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I don't really believe in those stereotypical gender roles. I don't think men should be working while women stay home taking care of the kids; I think it is a joint effort.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

> I hate it when I'm recognized because of my boyfriend or something like that. I'm not going to be recognized by "Mrs. so and so."--Brooke, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> It actually affects how I look at my current relationship. I just started dating a farmer and it made me realize that I don't mind cooking and cleaning but I also expect him to know how to do it. He's never had to cook, he just didn't cook. So I am teaching him. I did look for that in a guy, at least he is willing.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

Despite growing up on a farm, my father, or mother for that matter, never discussed farming as a career option for me. However, it was an option for all of my brothers; one that they took advantage of and even continue to farm today. Some respondents who lived on farms also reported that being a part of the family farming operation was never discussed with them; it was only an option for the male children:

> Since it was our family farm, the entire farm went to the males. So that also made me think I had to achieve something to step out of that façade. My dad did not talk to me about farming.--Denise, White, working class, rural, 20's

> Right, my brother would farm, but not me. My dad definitely talked to my brother about farming, but not me.--Brooke, White, middle class, rural, 20's

> I was not included in the conversations about farming...ever. My dad would say things to my brothers about taking over the farm someday. It was not an option for me or my sister.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

One respondent from a rural area shared personal effects resulting from the intersection of gender, class and place:

> My community is a farming community and that's what is most important, crop needs to get in and crop needs to get out. They are extremely dismissive of my education, I don't know if it's what that education is, or if it is because I am a woman and trying to pick their brain about it. It seems like it is a little bit of both. They are going to butt heads with me just because they don't want to hear it from a woman, they don't want me to be telling them how to farm because I am coming at it from a purely science aspect, I am not out there in the fields, so then I don't count, they only see my degree as something that will be a detriment to their farming, they don't want to look at it from a good aspect, so it is like a trifecta of dismissal all at the same time. I have to work, when I go home, I have to work 3 times as hard to get my point across.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

This respondent's words illustrate the difficulty of being an educated female in a male-dominated occupation within a patriarchal, working class rural environment. Research points out that rural spaces are gendered, which explains why females are not running farm operations and why they have to work much harder to be taken seriously. Additionally, education is often looked down upon in these types of communities; people may be dismissive of the "intellectuals," who in their eyes do not have the work experience or practical knowledge necessary to be successful.

Despite these obstacles, headway can and is being made, as Olivia noted:

> It definitely becomes a 3 problem thing, the gender, my degree and that I am not in the field. The gender thing is probably the toughest to overcome. But I have finally been able to sit down and talk with one younger farmer. Ever since sitting down with him, more farmers are more receptive, he is like, she knows what she is talking about....vouching for me. But that has just come about very recently.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

First generation female college students from rural areas often have to adapt to a gendered and classed home environment, either by working very hard to be seen as

credible or by code switching. Another respondent shares how she has had to do both in light of taking ownership of the family farm:

> When my dad died after I finished college, my mom became my dependent and then I took over the management of the farm. We rented it out. I would make mom make the decisions when to sell the grain. I still have our farm, I own the farm now.
> I will tell people in the farming community what I am doing if they ask....but otherwise it is back to what is happening on the farm... what is weather like, crops, etc.? You have to adjust to where they are at.--Josie, White, poor, rural, 50's

Often, first generation female students from rural areas must negotiate their behaviors in order to adapt to gender and class issues that are heavily prevalent. Efforts from some respondents indicate that although it is a difficult task, some progress can be made to advance the place of women and education in farming communities.

Gender

Studies have shown the persistence of "gendered roles, behaviors, expectations, and assumptions on college campuses" (Whitt et al. 2003). Academia has long been viewed as a male-dominated structure, in which females are faced with "exclusionary and gatekeeping" practices, unable to receive the same kind of mentoring and opportunities for professionalization (Souto-Manning and Ray 2007). Research has pointed out that "insufficient informal guidance is a significant factor in some women's lack of confidence in their academic and career success and has also been cited as especially damaging for women graduate students, who are at a crucial transition point for developing their professional identity" (Hall and Sandler 1984).

A gender critique of the institution revealed that many of my respondents believed gender barriers do exist:

> I think (being female) it hinders and I still think it hinders here (college). I believe that we are just not viewed as competent and dedicated to our work as males; we are viewed as

distracted by the kids. I still think it is a man's world here.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

I didn't really notice gender until I got here (college). I feel like I have to be better than the guys are to be accepted as just as smart. In the sciences, you have to, as a woman, prove yourself...more than a guy. I think it's still happening in academia, especially in my field. We have a lot of successful females, but they really had to work their butts off for it.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

It's not outright; none of the males are saying women aren't as good, it's just kind of present, but not spoken. It's just there, you feel it. I didn't really notice it until I came to college.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

The gender thing, it is a disadvantage in college, especially if you go into a field with mostly males, like engineering and other sciences. Women have to not only work more to stand out, but they are treated differently...like we can't handle as much or that we are more sensitive, have babies on the brain...or whatever.-- Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

A few respondents also mentioned different teaching expectations according to

stereotypical gender roles:

People expect female teachers to be nurturing elementary education type but the males can be more strict. I do worry about that, when I tell them they have to do this, are they not doing it because I am a woman or something else?--Phoebe, White, middle class, ural, 20's

I love my job but I know that teaching as a woman is very different that teaching as a man. I do think it is different; you can't ignore that difference.--Rose, White, lower middle class, urban, 20's

When I started teaching the impression that I got was that it would be harder for a women to control the classroom, they get less respect. Especially since I am younger, closer to their age and I'm a girl.--Debra, White, working class, rural, 20's

Although respondents identified gender barriers within the institution, specific

disciplines, and teaching, they were able to adapt to these differences in various ways:

That gives me that constant drive that I must do more, like double what a man would do. I look at our Dean, she has been a very successful woman, but she doesn't have children, she is overly dedicated to her job. It's kind of a mantra.--Joanne, 2 or more aces, poor, urban, 40's

I try to get noticed and stand out as much as possible. As a woman, I feel like we have to do more. I also make it a point to get involved with research projects and things, be in the conversations and not be excluded.--Paula, White, working class, rural, 20's

I mean I am a little taller and not super mousy so I didn't have the same experiences as others who might be intimidated. I didn't have to deal with that too much.--Phoebe, White, middle class, rural, 20's

I work in a female dominated lab, one of the few that are. My advisor is female; her head researcher is also female. She is kind of a ball buster, so she is tough. That's why I like her for an advisor. She gives you the sense that you are just as good. She doesn't take crap from any of the guys. I try to follow her lead.--Olivia, White, working class, rural, 20's

Olivia also discusses how she approaches teaching:

I've found that some instructors get pushed around a little more, I think it is more about how they project themselves, some people may see me as girly, but I am tough, I've observed other TA's and they revert back into the female submissive role. I don't have time for that, there are a lot of students and if I would do that they wouldn't learn much. Then I would fail in what I was supposed to be doing. I won't let myself revert back to that.

Some respondents did not view the institution as gendered or biased toward males, and felt they did not have to adapt in any way. Two respondents even aligned themselves with typical gender role expectations:

In our department we have only like a couple male GA's and the rest female. I do notice the little things that bother me don't bother the male GA's. It's part of being female, I make a bigger deal out of things than guys do. I can see something different for women, like just we might be more emotional and respond to things differently. Like I am a crier when I get stressed. I don't really think I am treated differently.--Isabel, White, middle class, urban, 20's

For females there is a certain expectation to be subservient to men, I am a traditionalist and don't have a problem with that; the other side doesn't see it that way, they are seeing it as you are doing it because you're a woman you don't have a choice. I see the gender line and I respect it.--Rose, White, lower middle, urban, 20's

According to Risman (2004), "the social structure is not experienced as oppressive if men and women do not see themselves as similarly situated; therein lies the power of gender"(p. 432). Students can have very different experiences of gender based on perceived beliefs of natural differences between men and women.

In my experiences, I have always felt the need to work harder to prove that I could do anything a man could do. I must acknowledge that this probably stems back to the fact that I was raised in a traditional household where differences were emphasized and gender roles were reinforced. However, I have also encountered gender bias within the institution, not anything that was outright, or in your face; but the subtle discrimination and exclusion that is inherent in the structure of the institution itself.

In summary, a gender critique of the institution revealed that gender was and still is an issue for many first generation female respondents. Although these respondents felt differential treatment, they were still able to adapt by looking to strong female mentors, projecting themselves in ways similar to men, and working harder to be noticed and included in what they perceived to be male-dominated academia.

Race

As mentioned previously, students with minority status who are also the first generation to attend college may be negatively affected by additional stressors beyond what college students normally face, such as cultural expectations to fulfill family obligations and duties (Phinney and Haas 2003), racism and discrimination, cultural insensitivity, and educational hegemony (Cokley et al. 2013, Goodman and West-Olatunji 2010). These types of stressors can lead to a lack of belonging and may leave

the student feeling more like an outsider than first generation college students of the racial majority.

My racial identity is white. I am considered to be in the majority; therefore, I cannot personally speak about how minority racial identities impact female first generation college students and how they must adapt. My racial identity has afforded me "white privilege" in all aspects of life. The ironic thing is that I have never felt privileged. In fact, I felt quite the opposite; that I had to work harder for everything I've accomplished because I paid my own way. I felt that nothing was given to me just because I was white; no doors were magically opened. It wasn't until I became more educated that I understood just what white privilege means and how it exists in society, including academia. McIntosh (1988) best describes white privilege as an "invisible package of unearned assets," based more on skin color than class, gender, place, and so on; although these elements are all interconnected (p. 2). I cashed in on these unearned assets each day; oblivious to the fact that I was doing so.

Throughout the interview process, it was evident that most respondents felt like outsiders in academia because of multiple identities related to first generation status, class, place, race, and gender. Of course, not all participants experienced the same combinations of identity, and not all participants felt oppressed in any or all of these identities. I am a female first generation college student from a rural, working class background. Through an intersectional lens, I could identify with having to deal with at least two, if not three, oppressed identities: class and gender, as well as first generation status and/or place, which made me feel different from others; an outsider.

The 'Token.' Of the 21 female first generation interview participants in this study, 9 indicated a racial identity other than White or European American. However, the 4 Native American respondents reported feeling even more like outsiders, specifically stating that their racial identity caused them to feel more oppressed than any other part of their identity; including class, gender, or first generation status. Respondents reported feeling like the "token Indian" in their department and in some cases the entire university. Token status is defined as "achievement-oriented situations in which an individual's social group represents 15% or less of the total group" (Dasgupta 2011:237).

The Native American respondents indicated that race was a very difficult issue throughout their academic career and strongly impacted their identity. It might also be expected that because Native American women might represent two, if not three, disadvantaged groups (race, gender, class), they are most vulnerable for negative academic outcomes (Chavous et al. 2004:3).

The lack of Native American students in graduate programs serves to perpetuate feelings of being an outsider, as well as notions that faculty are not being sincere or honest in their evaluations of them as a student, merely getting them through because they are a rarity. The excerpts below emphasize how these students have had to negotiate their identity as a "token Indian," experiencing differential treatment and isolation within the institution:

> It's difficult for me to not wonder if I exist as a novelty for those in the department. Although I think they would give me some sort of high rating, I can't help thinking that it's a mistake, its sympathy (after all, she came from a reservation so she's doing a good job with all she's had to overcome) or getting a female native student through the program is an ego boost for them. I don't mean to imply that I believe everyone to be lying or that they have solely selfish motives, but …it's hard to quiet that tiny voice in the back of your head.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

I think it has to do with the fact that I am the only Indian person in class. For me, that's what it is. It's not about being first generation for me, it's about well, I am different. I didn't have a better education like you guys did because I went to an Indian School. So that's where I struggle. I feel like they treat me different and that I am expected to give the Indian opinion all the time. Even in my class here, one student was talking about Indians and the whole class turned and looked at me for my response, like really I am in grad school and this is still happening? There were more Indians at (College name) and the campus wasn't any better for it. I am like the token Indian.--Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

I think the issue has always been that I am Native. I feel like in college, it's worse for me than other races, especially in graduate school. Like the international students have their own population and stuff, but for me, there's just not enough of us. I always feel like I'm the token Indian in class. The one that has to speak for all Indians, the one that everyone looks at for the Indian perspective. Maybe I don't want to be the token. Maybe I just want an education like everyone else. Why does it always have to come up? I almost dropped out several times because of this....it's like, I don't need to deal with this crap. I feel like I am kind of floating out here alone, not a real part of it.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

Right, like ok, so that's what I experience. I am always the token Indian, but it's not just me now. I've always been the only Native person, no one around me was telling me I could do this. I don't know. Through all my educational experiences, race has been a big thing for me. It sticks out for me, that what's funny for me, I was the only native person in my undergrad, in my master's degree I was the only native, having this cultural center here, I don't go over there, because I would be like, what am I doing? I am not used to it. I've always been the only one, I don't know what to do with it. Even now, I'm still like, probably the only Woodland Indian, as opposed to Plains, even culturally it's still not a match there.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

As Faith pointed out above, she might be the only Native American student from a particular tribe, indicating that just because someone has a similar racial identity, they may not be culturally the same. Because "token" individuals are grossly underrepresented in a given context, they are viewed as representatives of their entire group, meaning they are constantly exposed to others' expectations and generalizations of that group (Chavous et al. 2004:4). Some negative repercussions of this "token" status include heightened performance pressures, exclusion from social interactions with

members of the dominant group, and stereotyping that places them in inferior positions" (Chavous et al. 2004:4).

In addition to the pressure, exclusion, and stereotyping, Dasgupta (2011) states that 'members of disadvantaged groups who are often solos or tokens in high-achieving contexts may be particularly vulnerable to imposter fears" (p. 232). This may help explain why Native American respondents also had higher CIPS scores, indicating frequent and intense imposter feelings.

Exploited, Exploitative, or Both? Adapting to the repercussions of being a "token" student was difficult for the Native American respondents in this study. Through the course of interviews, respondents implied the notion that they are either exploiting the system, being exploited, or both. Below are interview excerpts which support this premise:

> It comes back to being a student, but it seems that sometimes with my race, that I felt as a student, that I was exploiting it, like oh I can get grants or scholarships as a native, but also in the classroom situation..... does this professor want to be able to say I got an Native American through? They can congratulate themselves, not based on my ability; think they are helping me, it is easy to discount, feeling exploitative and being exploited. I am the selling point, of course, I have no proof but it's sort of a feeling, I know that it is an insecurity in my own head. They need a show pony here. Weirdly, I don't know if it's getting better. That part seems to be still there.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

> I always feel like people think we get everything for free. Free education, free school supplies, free lunches.....really? Well, this hasn't been the case for me. I have paid for things myself, not all of it, but most of it. But there are scholarships and grants that I have gotten because I was Native, so part of me feels like I have an advantage that way. I also feel like professors want me to succeed because I am Native and it wouldn't look good to fail me, since I am like the only one in class. Maybe I have taken advantage of this. It definitely makes you question yourself and whether you are successful based on your abilities not your race.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> I think that people expect that I manipulate that [being Native] more for my benefit, they give me far too much credit. Like I don't have to work as hard as they do because I am Native and when I get through I will just have job offers because I am Native and

everyone wants a Native woman. Well, that has not been my experience. I have had to work hard for every opportunity. People expect that I do manipulate that or use that but I really don't.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

As I listened to my respondents, I got a sense that there was an ongoing struggle to escape the stereotypes and social constructions related to Native Americans as a whole, but more specifically with respect to educational success.

Appearances Matter. Native American respondents emphasized how racialized experiences impacted their identity, but also reported that the degree of difference was also a major factor in their identity negotiation. Basically, these students pointed out that their appearance or degree of color made a difference in how they were treated by other non-Native and Native people; including faculty, students, friends, and family. This type of treatment occurred in both home and academic environments. Respondents shared the disadvantages and advantages of their appearance and the ongoing process of identity negotiation:

> I have more distinguishing Native features which has actually made it easier for me in some ways, but hard for me in others. At least people aren't guessing about what race I am or if I'm mixed. Natives aren't treating me different because of how I look. The bad thing is that because of this, everyone assumes that I am very traditional, which I am not. Professors just assume that because I look 100% Native, that my appearance makes it okay for them to treat me in a certain way or assume I act a certain way. I'm like, maybe I should cut my hair, dye it blonde, and get some blue contacts.....would it make a difference in how I am treated? Of course it would.--Rachel, Native American, working class, rural, 20's

> I didn't know how to deal with it, and my friends were like if you don't tell people you're Native no one will know, which is a whole other set of identity issues. Growing up in a native community when you don't look Native, it's not an advantage to you.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

> You did notice splits, in terms of, because I don't necessarily look Native, you might, or unless I told people, they wouldn't know. It is encounters with people I don't know that it is kind of insulting what they are saying, weirdly, one of the classic examples, someone said, "I wouldn't have known you were Native American," kind of innocuous, but the

fact that it was said as a compliment, like, wow, you really lucked out. It's when you put it with the inflection and tone, it changes it. What do you say to that? Uh, thank you? I don't know the appropriate response to that.—Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Wendy goes on to describe specific treatment she receives based on her name and appearance:

> With my name...they are like, are you married to someone Native, or what? Or, if they talk to me on the phone first, learn my name first, then it is disappointment, expecting a certain person to look like this….I have had people, professors even, say, you do not look like I thought you would. They don't realize it, I don't think I owe you a story, but I feel I have to give you a story.

Respondents also emphasized the intersection of race with gender as an additional disadvantage:

> I just remember a lot more attention being paid to the boys, more of a traditional sense, not that the girls were treated bad.....but a lot of the things they did, ceremonial things, that was boy heavy.... pulling the boys aside and the girls are there again, if someone needs to watch the girls, so alright, but we really need the boys to know how to do this.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

> I get, "You are not Native." There's a lot of identity issues with being Indian depending upon how you look, and it's from non-Indians and Indians, from all corners. My son's father is white, so he doesn't look Indian at all. I struggle because a lot of my friends were half white and remember them going through not knowing who they were, having to pick a side. I feel guilt for setting my son up for that. But at least he's a boy, I think it's worse if you are a girl.--Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

> With my last name.....other people who think that any sort of jesting is immediately ok. Busting your chops a little bit, then they realize that might not be okay with a girl, maybe a guy it would be okay, I am not sure which one this plays into, gender or race, to the point that it is almost getting offensive, I don't really know you. It is interesting to see their face or hear that they realize how messed up it is, and they spend time apologizing.--Wendy, Native American, working class, rural, 30's

Another example of how appearances matter when it comes to racial identity is given by two respondents who were both White and Native American. Although they identified as 'two or more races' for the interview, both found out they were part Native

American later in life, and neither mentioned having any negative experiences because of their race. This can be explained by the fact that neither adopted the Native American racial identity as their primary identity or it may be attributed to not having distinguishing Native American features or appearance.

The excerpts below highlight each of their experiences with race. One participant identified more with being 'white trash' than being Native American, which plays into the intersection of class and race. The other participant shared that although she was open to it, she had not adopted Native American culture and it didn't have much of an impact on her identity or her life experiences:

> Another interesting thing. I wasn't told until I was an adult that I was part Native American. I always felt the draw to the culture. Things that I purchased 20 years ago that I was just drawn too. To me if anything it has helped define what I do here. For me, it is a help. My son is half Native American, from Cheyenne River Sioux. So, for me, the race thing was not an issue, in terms of career and success, wasn't a negative or a positive. It is a part of me now. In college and grad school the first time, it was more about being white trash, having to prove myself.--Joanne, 2 or more races, poor, urban, 40's

> I am a little Native American. We didn't find out until later in life so it hasn't had much effect on me. I think I've always embraced it and didn't know what it was about. I thought it was from other things. I haven't participated or practiced the culture or traditions. I have always been open to it.--Jane, 2 or more races, working class, rural, 50's

Interestingly, the other participant who indicated 'two or more races' reported feeling confused about her racial identity, which was White, Latino, and Native American. She supports the idea that appearances matter in that she has adapted by "passing" for white most of her life, therefore racial identity hasn't specifically been an obstacle in terms of educational or other success; however, it has been a struggle for her to feel connected. In this sense, the process of experiencing and negotiating identity has

been difficult for this respondent because she felt a lack of belonging to a certain racial

group or identity:

> I am Native American, White and Latino. I don't really look Native, but I am not overly Latino either and I don't really look full blown white, although I can pass. It is hard for me because of my appearance. I don't really know what my identity is.....I check the box that says 'more than one race', but I don't really identify with one over the other. I feel like professors and other students may want to ask me, but they don't. I'm married to a white man, so my last name is pretty generic. Should I feel lucky that I can pass for white? Maybe... but, I've actually struggled with my identity for some time now.-- Betsey, 2 or more races, poor, rural, 30's

Two interview participants were international students from Nepal and China.

The Nepalese participant reported that her racial identity had not been an obstacle in her

U.S. studies, mostly because she was able to adapt due to a large Nepalese presence on

campus:

> We have so many Nepalese here on campus, so we don't miss it so much.--Beth, Asian, middle class, urban, 30's

Beth also stated that there weren't any real degrees of difference in appearances at

home, but most of the differential treatment in her home country dealt with

socioeconomic disparities, which she did not experience because she grew up with

middle class privilege:

> I like to believe that I grew up in a pretty privileged family, in the sense that I got to go to a private English school, learned English and how to speak it, more than 20% of population is still illiterate.... It's a private school, you can only admit your child if you can afford it.

Conversely, the Chinese respondent discussed how her race has impacted her

identity while she has studied in the United States. She discussed feeling a lack of

belonging and isolation, resulting in her desire to go back to her home country:

> After I came here, it was so different, I was so lost when I came here, I can normally talk to people, my language was so poor, but we didn't have much chance to practice it. The language was killing me and I had no connections. My roommate picked me up and he left. I didn't know anyone. I was so sad then. The people around me I didn't know what to do.

> I'm always thinking I do not belong here. This is not my home, I can't get inside of the circle, I still feel like an outsider. This does not belong to me. I just come here and study here, it makes me to decide that. I want to go back to my place. That's the feeling.-- Violet, Asian, poor, urban, 30's

Violet also confirmed that most of the differential treatment in her home country involved class and gender issues, including rural vs. urban issues and the one child policy in China:

> Most who are educated find a job in big city. They are well off, but for the lower classes they are living in the region, more rural places. Most of them are farmers. They don't make too much money.

> You heard about the 1 child policy in china right? My brother was the first child so he was ok. When my mom was carrying me, my mom almost got an abortion because of the policy, not sure what reason she did not. She could stay there, but we got fined and had to pay extra money to the government. You have to pay, the amount is very high, big amount because we were poor....that affected many people.

As evidenced by the respondents in this study, racial identity is very influential in how students experience both home and academia. Native American respondents felt their "token" status negatively impacted the college experience, both socially and academically, resulting in ongoing identity negotiation. Respondents indicated that appearances, or degrees of difference, created advantages and disadvantages in both home and academic worlds.

Despite the challenges faced because of their racial identity, respondents were able to adapt and overcome obstacles in order to be successful. The quotes below illustrate how they were able to do so:

(Being the token Indian).. It was really frustrating in my undergrad, but now I take it as an opportunity to teach people. I try to tell that to my students.....But thankfully at the college (where I work) it isn't like that, that's the one place where I feel like I can talk about my experiences and put my degrees on the wall, and the other students can see that and I can talk to them about it, and they see that she did it, everyone knows in the community who did what.--Jackie, Native American, lower middle class, rural, 30's

It's not easy to deal with the way others have treated me. It has been a long road....just trying to stay positive, focused, not paying attention to all of the negative stuff. I guess I just keep at it, you know? They can keep on judging me by how I look, my culture, what have you. The more difficult it is, the more determined I am to hang here.--Rachel, Native American, working class, 20's

I had to do a lot of negotiating with my identity while I was there (college). But I didn't just accept it, I was very vocal. I just focused on being a voice for kids, put my focus there instead.--Faith, Native American, working class, urban, 30's

Faith goes on to describe other obstacles she has overcome:

There is always this race piece that links into it, when people go after research grants that have something to do with Native Americas, they assume we will do it. Maybe we aren't interested in doing it, I'm like, you can go after that, but I am not doing it.

It took me a year to adjust to the rigor, coming from (a place) where there was no rigor, trying to figure out writing skills, I had to go to the writing center, I didn't know mechanics, no one really critiqued me. So figuring out how classes worked and being self-directed, time management.

Summary

In conclusion, respondents illustrated the difficulty of negotiating multiple identities across the intersections of race, class, gender, place and first generation status. Despite the repercussions stemming from a lack of knowledge and imposter feelings, first generation female graduate students were able to utilize strategies, such as code switching and playing "resident expert," as well as connections with adults, teachers,

mentors, institutional agents, siblings, and others to keep one foot in both the home and academic world. Respondents were also able to utilize their resiliency and self-sufficiency to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to disadvantages across the intersections, both at home and in academia.

Chapter Nine will provide a summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings, as well as limitations and future directions for research.

Chapter Nine

Discussion

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how the intersections of race, class, gender and place impact identity negotiation among first generation female graduate students and how these identities are influenced and shaped by the structures and role expectations of both home and academic environments.

This research addresses the scarcity of literature on first generation *graduate* level students, as well as the lack of intersectional research in identity and student development studies. Additionally, there has been a dearth of literature focusing on class, race, and place, and how these identities influence women's feelings of being academic imposters. Thus, the extensive and more profound experience of graduate education has the potential to shed light on whether identity struggles related to the imposter phenomenon persist throughout the life span.

According to Pelias (2003), autoethnography "lets you use yourself to get to culture" (p. 372). Autoethnography enhances this research by allowing recognition of my own identity; sharing my thoughts, reactions and experiences with others for the purpose of "extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes 2000:21). I believe combining my voice with my respondents' voices extends sociological understanding so that readers may find their own voice in the process.

Findings

This study focuses on first generation graduate students and identity. Although research has shown that first generation students are disadvantaged in many areas, it is

important to consider that not all FGC students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and share similar experiences (Orbe 2004). Accordingly, first generation status may be "highly salient to one person's identity, not important at all to another, or somewhere in between for a third, depending on the situation." (Orbe 2004:134). Thus, the key is to examine how first generation status intersects with other aspects of identity, including race, class, gender or place; and to what extent any or all influence identity.

Research Question #1:

The first research question asks how female first generation graduate students negotiate identity at the intersections of race, class, gender and place; whether and what repercussions result across the intersections within various contexts.

An intersectional analysis within the contexts of family and class status, personal expectations, cultural images, and the regulatory structure of institutions revealed that female first generation student experiences were characterized by a lack of knowledge both prior to and during college. Respondents reported not knowing how to navigate the institutional structure, including the process of applying, getting accepted, and securing financial aid and/or scholarships and assistantships; as well as registering for courses, maintaining good grades, and successfully completing degree requirements. Respondents also indicated not knowing the "rules of the game:" academic expectations and bureaucratic processes associated with being a college student. This sense of 'not knowing' across the intersections of race, class, gender and place strongly impacted how respondents' negotiate identity, as well as their entire college experience. Repercussions from 'not knowing' included barriers to personal and academic progress, as well as systemic isolation, resulting in increased self-sufficiency and lack of belonging.

Explanations of why female first generation college students in this study felt they did not know are supported at the intersections of race, class, gender and place within and across the contexts mentioned above. Specific reasons included: lack of parental knowledge and experience, focus on 'real work,' lack of a safety net, not asking for help, familial/cultural roles and expectations, inaccurate or biased perceptions and expectations of the college experience, dominant cultural images of college life, lack of social capital and the controlling institutional structure.

There was an awareness of multiple disadvantages from first generation female students who were of racial/ethnic minority, from poor to working class backgrounds, or both. However, the combinations of disadvantages and individual perceptions varied among the respondents. For some, family and class status combined with gender to doubly disadvantage; for others, family and class status, racial/ ethnic identity, and gender converged to triply disadvantage.

Individual perceptions of disadvantage were the strongest among respondents with both racial/ethnic minority identity and poor to working class status. However, despite the intersectional nature of multiple identities, respondents often acknowledged one dimension or salient identity, which they felt more significantly impacted their lives and who they are as people. Abes et al. (2007) indicate that respondents often do not understand how multiple identities are simultaneously affected by race, class, gender, and other social dimensions. Without this context, respondents may "perceive some dimensions of their identities as less salient, at different times and under differing circumstances" (Abes et al. 2007:18). Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that some respondents identified with one dimension more than others, despite having

multiple disadvantages. I was careful not to impose my ideas of intersectionality onto the respondents in order for them to better understand it. Instead, I allowed them to communicate about themselves in their own way, with many becoming more aware of how race, class, gender and place intersected as they described their own process of identity negotiation.

The intersection of gender, class, race and place created a situation of double and triple disadvantage for students, which according to previous literature and respondents in this study, resulted in increased feelings of fraudulence and fear of being unmasked. Thus, first generation poor to working class female students of racial/ethnic minority are at higher risk for developing characteristics of the imposter phenomenon that can more profoundly affect their identity, and in a larger sense, their overall well-being.

Research Question #2:

Chapter Seven discusses the findings related to research question #2, the extent to which imposter feelings affect female first generation graduate students' identity negotiation and whether the imposter phenomenon manifests differently across the distinct lenses of race, class, gender and place. Attention was placed on whether and to what extent female first generation students' lack of knowledge results in further repercussions to the self through the presence of the imposter phenomenon, and how these repercussions ultimately affect students' identity negotiation.

Qualitative findings revealed a strong connection between female first generation graduate students lack of knowledge and the imposter phenomenon. Imposter feelings caused respondents to believe they could be exposed as frauds at any time; as if what they didn't know was eventually going to catch up with them and possibly get them removed

from college or prohibit them from completing their degree. All but one respondent identified with characteristics of the imposter phenomenon; but more importantly, a majority identified with multiple, intense imposter feelings, primarily those from poor to working class backgrounds and racial/ethnic minority identity.

Findings indicated that the imposter phenomenon did manifest a bit differently across the distinct lenses of intersectionality, both in the interview sample of female first generation graduate students and the online survey sample of female graduate students. In the interview sample, class and race/ethnicity created the most significant disparities in terms of imposter feelings. Of the 12 respondents with the highest CIPS scores, 9 were from poor to working class families. Six of 9 respondents with racial/ethnic minority identities were among those with the highest CIPS scores, including all of the Native American respondents, and 2 out of 3 respondents with a racial/ethnic identity of two or more races. The interview data suggests that the Native American respondents experienced very intense imposter feelings, with an average CIPS score of 80, including a high of 92. Conversely, the Asian respondents had moderate to very low CIPS scores.

The quantitative findings from the online CIPS survey also supported the quantitative findings from the interview sample, thereby increasing the validity of the reported data. As in the interview data, quantitative results from the online survey show that class, race, place and parental educational status influenced the presence of imposter feelings based on CIPS scores. Online survey results further indicated that the imposter phenomenon manifests differently across the intersections.

Four hypotheses were tested:

> **Hypothesis 1**: Respondents with minority racial identities will have higher CIPS scores than White or European American respondents.

Hypothesis 2: Respondents' CIPS scores will decrease as mother and father's educational level increases.

Hypothesis 3: Respondents' CIPS scores will decrease as community population increases.

Hypothesis 4: Respondents' CIPS scores will decrease as yearly family income increases.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were fully supported by the data. Family income level and community population were negatively correlated with CIPS scores, meaning that a categorical increase in either of these is associated with a decrease in CIPS scores, or imposter feelings. Hypothesis 1 and 2 were partially supported. Mother's educational level was also negatively correlated with CIPS scores, meaning that a categorical increase in mother's education is associated with a decrease in CIPS scores. However, father's educational status was not significant. When compared to White or European identity, Native American racial identity was significantly associated with higher CIPS scores (over 16 points), indicating frequent and highly intense imposter feelings. All other minority racial identities were not significantly associated with an increase or decrease in CIPS scores.

The quantitative findings provide much insight into the impact of first generation status intersected with race, class, gender and place and the presence and intensity of imposter feelings. The online survey data provided a similar representation of the interview data in a larger context, verifying the existence of the imposter phenomenon with analogous gradations across the intersections.

Repercussions for the respondents experiencing imposter feelings included fear, anxiety, stress, self-criticism and self-doubt, as well as a continual cycle of

procrastination and overworking. These repercussions contribute to the systemic isolation and lack of belonging which was described in Chapter Six, as well as increased self-reliance stemming from feelings of inferiority and fraudulence.

The lack of knowledge respondents described combined with the presence of imposter characteristics across the intersections of race, class, and gender greatly influenced how first generation female students negotiated their identities, resulting in repercussions within various contexts, as well as repercussions to the self which serve to keep these students on the periphery of both academic and home environments, straddling both worlds.

Research Question #3:

Chapter Eight was a response to research question #3, how first generation female graduate students adapt to the challenges of 'not knowing' as well as feeling like an imposter, including the process of identity negotiation and adaptation within the contexts of home and academia, as well as implications for success.

First-generation students often encounter obstacles which keep them isolated from both home and academic culture due to conflicts "that arise from living simultaneously in two vastly different worlds while being fully accepted in neither" (Engle 2007:36). Respondents identified with straddling both home and academic worlds, illustrating the difficulty of negotiating multiple identities across the intersections of race, class, gender, place and first generation status.

Findings suggest that first generation female graduate students with a minority racial identity not only experience the effects of gender and class issues, but also the intersection of race as an oppressed identity. As mentioned throughout, these students

often experience a triple disadvantage of being oppressed in not only one, but three contexts. Although repercussions due to class and gender issues were noted by some Native American respondents, *all* acknowledged race as having the most significant impact on their identity and experiences in both academic and home environments. This finding suggests that race may be a salient identity for the Native American respondents, meaning it has a greater likelihood of being brought into various situations across contexts (Stryker 2008).

According to Stryker, (2008) "salient identities are likely to produce behavior consistent with expectations attached to those identities" (p. 24). This notion may help explain why respondents felt pressured to behave in ways that represented Native Americans as a whole, and also why they reported experiencing a heightened sense of isolation and "token" status throughout their educational experiences. Native American respondents mentioned the difficulty of negotiating identity in both home and academic cultures. CIPS scores from both the online survey and interview samples reinforced the qualitative findings, indicating a strongly positive relationship between Native American racial identity and imposter feelings.

This study reinforces other findings where racial minority students reported being "the only one" or "token" in their departments, leaving them feeling "isolated and marginalized." (Souto-Manning and Ray 2007:281, Gasman et al. 2004). The findings from this study continue to emphasize the various obstacles, repercussions, and implications for success regarding minority graduate students, but more specifically, identify the unique struggles of Native American first generation female graduate students at the intersection of race, class, gender and place.

Despite the repercussions stemming from a lack of knowledge and imposter feelings, first generation female graduate students were able to utilize strategies, such as code switching and acting as "resident expert," as well as connections with adults, mentors, institutional agents, siblings, and others to keep one foot in both the home and academic world.

Respondents were also able to employ their resiliency and self-sufficiency to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to disadvantages across the intersections, both at home and in academia. Success seemed to hinge on both contextual and personal factors; despite disadvantages across race, gender, class, place and first generation status, respondents were able to utilize important aspects of their identity to overcome barriers to attainment.

Study Limitations

There are a few limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the qualitative sample size could have been increased to further strengthen findings; however, typical qualitative studies involving in-depth interviews generally range from 10-30 participants, placing this study in comparable standing. Additionally, the qualitative sample did not include racial/ethnic minorities outside of Native Americans, Asians, and both Native American/White and Native American/White/Latino, thus limiting the scope and generalizability of the findings. It would have been beneficial to include more diverse racial/ethnic identities to examine and compare characteristics of the imposter phenomenon, as well as first generation students.

Generalizability of the findings is also limited given that both the online survey sample and the interview sample were not randomly selected. Another limitation involves the geographic location of the sample. The female graduate students were all enrolled at the same institution; however, the sample included both on campus and online students which helps create more geographic diversity. It is difficult to determine whether the results would be replicated with a sample consisting of graduate students attending different institutions.

The Clance IP Scale (Clance 1985) was the survey instrument used to measure imposter phenomenon characteristics. Although this instrument has been proven to be quite reliable, it may have been advantageous to use another measure, such as the Harvey Imposter Phenomenon Scale (Harvey 1981) or the Perceived Fraudulence Scale (Kolligan and Sternberg 1991), along with other self-report measures to strengthen the validity of the imposter phenomenon as a construct.

Implications and Future Directions

The study of identity and student development could especially benefit from the results of this research, since much of the previous research lacked an intersectional approach, typically examining identity through similar developmental processes or simplistic additive approaches (Bowleg 2008; Torres et al. 2009; Abes et al. 2007). The consequences of previous research approaches include a lack of complexity in understanding the interaction of identity processes and fundamental within group differences (Torres et al. 2009). This lack of complexity leads to the problem of "essentializing groups and failure to question the ways in which power operates differently in the lives of individuals" (Torres et al. 2009:589).

Using an intersectional approach to give voice to students who are often marginalized or underrepresented not only provides a framework to understand and research identity and student identity development, but also addresses the larger purpose of institutional and social policy change. The resulting data from this study can be utilized to shape institutional policies and programs that provide student support services within colleges and universities, and to assist graduate departments in identifying the needs of new graduate student populations.

This research aids in understanding students and identity development by illustrating the whole student through multiple complexities of race, class, gender, and place. More specifically, results from this research help shed some light on Native American underrepresentation in graduate education, as well as provide insight into the specific needs of female Native American graduate students. Further studies involving Native American graduate students and the imposter phenomenon would be helpful in identifying and understanding the significance of this relationship to the lack of representation in higher education.

This type of study is easily replicable with other populations or student subgroups, paving the way for future intersectional identity research encompassing both quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, data from this research could also be the beginning of in-depth, longitudinal data collection to examine the influence of changing environments on identity development and the possible persistence of the imposter phenomenon over the life course.

References

Abes, Elisa S., Susan R. Jones and Marylu K. McEwen. 2007. "Reconceptualizing the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity: The Role of Meaning Making Capacity in the Construction of Multiple Identities.*" Journal of College Student Development* 48:1-22.

Adler, Paul S. and Seok-Woo Kwon. 2002. "Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept." The *Academy of Management Review* 27(1): 17-40.

Agnew, John A. and James S. Duncan, editors 1989: *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations.* Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Anderson, Michelle, Jackie Taylor and Mary Ziegler. 2007. "I Don't Know the Secret Handshake: Making Social Class Visible in a Learning Context." Retrieved from http://www.adulterc.org/Proceedings/2007/Proceedings/Anderson_etal.pdf

Aries, Elizabeth and Maynard Seider. 2005. "The Interactive Relationship between Class Identity and the College Experience: The Case of Lower Income Students." *Qualitative Sociology* 28(4):419-443.

Aronson, Pamela. 2003. "Feminists or Postfeminists?: Young Women's Attitudes toward Feminism and Gender Relations." *Gender and Society* 17(6):903-922.

Aronson, Pamela. 2008. "Breaking Barriers or Locked Out?" Class-based Perceptions and Experiences of Post-secondary Education." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 119:41-54.

Austin, Ann. 2002. "Preparing the Next Generation of Faculty: Graduate School as Socialization to the Academic Career." *The Journal of Higher Education* 73(1): 94-122.

Azmitia, Margarita, Moin Syed, and Kimberley Radmacher. 2008. "On the Intersection of Personal and Social Identities: Introduction and Evidence from a Longitudinal Study of Emerging Adults." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 120:1-16.

Balaam, Madeline. 2011. "An Autoethnographical Design: Using Autoethnographic Methods to Understand and Portray Experience through Design." In *Workshop Paper. Culture Lab, Newcastle University. Newcastle, NE1 7RU.*

Bassett, Patricia. 1990. "The Minority Female in Postsecondary Administration: Challenges and Strategies." *Women in Higher Education: Changes and Challenges* 238-245.

Baxter, Arthur and Carolyn Britton. 2001. "Risk, Identity and Change: Becoming a Mature Student." *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 11:87-102.

Bell, Lee Anne. 1989. "Something's Wrong Here and it's Not Me: Challenging the Dilemmas that Block Girls' Success." *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 12*(2), 118-130.

Berg, Helen M and Marianne A. Ferber. 1983. "Men and Women Graduate Students: Who Succeeds and Why?" *The Journal of Higher Education* 54(6):629-648.

Bernard, Naijean, Stephen J. Dollinger and Nerella V. Ramaniah. 2002. "Applying the Big Five Personality Factors to the Imposter Phenomenon." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 78(2):321-333.

Bogdan, Robert C. and Sari Knopp Biklen. 2007. *Qualitative Research for Education* (5th.) Boston: Pearson Education.

Bourke, Brian. 2013. "Coming to America: The Influence of College-Themed Movies on Perceptions of International Students." *College Student Journal* 462-469.

Bowleg, Lisa. 2008. "When Black + Lesbian When Black + lesbian + woman ≠ Black lesbian woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative intersectionality Research." *Sex Roles 59:* 312-325.

Bryant, Lia and Barbara Pini. 2009. Gender, Class and Rurality: Australian Case Studies." *Journal of Rural Studies* 25:48-57.

Buchmann, Claudia, Thomas Diprete, and Anne McDaniel. 2008. "Gender Inequalities in Education." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:319-337.

Burck, Charlotte. 2005. "Comparing Qualitative Research Methodologies for Systemic Research: The Use of Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis." *Journal of Family Therapy* 27:237-262.

Caselman, T.D. 2003. "The Imposter Phenomenon among American and Japanese Adolescents: Gender, Self-perception, Self-concept, and Social Support Variables." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 64(6-B):2955.

Cerulo, Karen A. 1997. "Identity Construction: New issues, New Directions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 385-409.

Chang, Heewon. 2007. *Autoethnography as Method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Charmaz , Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Chavous, Tabbye M, Angel Harris, Deborah Rivas, Lumas Helaire, and Laurette Green. 2004. "Racial Stereotypes and Gender in Context." *Sex Roles* 51(1/2):1-16.

Chrisman, Sabine, W.A. Pieper, Pauline R. Clance, C.L. Holland, and Cheryl Glickauf-Hughes. 1995. "Validation of the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 65(3): 456-467.

Clance, Pauline R. 1985. *The Imposter Phenomenon*. Atlanta: Peachtree.

Clance, Pauline C., Debbara Dingman, Susan L. Reviere and Dianne R. Stober. 1995. "Imposter Phenomenon in an Interpersonal/Social Context: Origins and Treatment." *Women & Therapy* 16(4):79-96.

Clance, Pauline Rose and Suzanne Ament Imes. 1978. "The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention." Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice 15(3):241-247.

Clance, Pauline R. and Maureen A. O'Toole. 1988. "The Imposter Phenomenon: An Internal Barrier to Empowerment and Achievement." *Women and Therapy* 6:51-64.

Cokley, Kevin, Shannon McClain, Alicia Enciso, and Mercedes Martinez. 2013. "An Examination of the Impact of Minority Status Stress and Imposter Feelings on the Mental Health of Diverse Ethnic Minority College Students." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 41:82-95.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1998. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation." *Hypatia* 13(3):62-82.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (2nd) New York: Routledge.

Cooper, Catherine R. "Multiple selves, multiple worlds: Cultural perspectives on individuality and connectedness in adolescent development." *Cultural processes in child development* 29 (1999): 25-57.

Cote, James E. 2005. "Identity Capital, Social Capital and the Wider Benefits of Learning: Generating Resource Facilitative of Social Cohesion." *London Review of Education* 3(3):221-237.

Correll, Shelley J. 2004. "Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations." *American Sociological Review* 69(1): 93-113.

Cowman, Shaun E. and Joseph R. Ferrari. 2002. "Am I for Real?" Predicting Imposter Tendencies from Self-Handicapping and Affective Components." *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 30(2): 119-125.

Craddock, Sarah, Matt Birnbaum, Katrina Rodriguez, Christopher Cobb, and Steven Zeeh. 2011. "Doctoral Students and the Imposter Phenomenon: Am I Smart Enough to be Here?" *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 48(4): 429-442.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 14: 538–54.

Curry, Regina M. and Phyllis Cunningham. 2000. "Co-Learning in the Community." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 87: 73-82.

Dasgupta, Nilanjana. 2011. "Ingroup Experts and Peers as Social Vaccines Who Inoculate the Self-Concept: The Stereotype Inoculation Model." *Psychological Inquiry* 22: 231-246.

Davis, Kathy. 2008. "Intersectionality as Buzzword." *Feminist Theory* 9(1):67-85.

Dennis, Jessica M, Jean S. Phinney and Lizette Ivy Chuateco. 2005. "The Role of Motivation, Parental Support, and Peer Support in the Academic Success of Ethnic Minority First-Generation College Students." *Journal of College Student Development* 46(3):223-236.

Dumais, Susan. 2002. "Cultural Capital, Gender, and School Success: The Role of Habitus." *Sociology of Education* 75(1):44-68.

Ellis, Evelynn. 2001. "The Impact of Race and Gender on Graduate School Socialization, Satisfaction with Doctoral Study, and Commitment to Degree Completion." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 25(1):30-46.

Ellis, Carolyn and Arthur P. Bochner. 2000. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." Pp. 733-768 In Norman Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Engle, Jennifer. 2007."Postsecondary Access and Success for First-Generation College Students." *American Academic* 3(1): 25-48.

Ewing, Kimberly M., Tina Q. Richardson, Linda James-Myers, and Richard K. Russell. 1996. "The Relationship between Racial Identity Attitudes, Worldview, and African American Graduates' Experience of the Imposter Phenomenon." *Journal of Black Psychology* 22(1): 53-66.

Ferrari, Joseph F. 2005. "Imposter Tendencies and Academic Dishonesty: Do They Cheat Their Way to Success?" *Social Behavior and Personality* 33(1): 11-18.

Fischer, Mary J. 2007. "Settling into Campus Life: Differences by Race/Ethnicity in College Involvement and Outcomes." *The Journal of Higher Education* 78(2): 125-161.

Frable, Deborrah E. 1997. "Gender, Racial, Ethnic, Sexual, and Class Identities." *Annual Review of Psychology* 48:139-62.

Frye, Steven, Reggie Curran, Cathy A Pierce, Eva Young, and Mary Ziegler. 2005. "Crashing the Party: A Working Class Perspective on the Ivory Tower" *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Adult Education Research Conference* (pp. 147-152). Athens: University of Georgia.

Fuller, Abigail. 2004. "What Difference Does Difference Make? Women, Race-Ethnicity, Social Class and Social Change." *Race, Gender & Class* 11 (4):8-29.

Gardner, Susan. 2008. "Fitting the Mold of Graduate School: A Qualitative Study of Socialization in Doctoral Education.*" Innovative Higher Education* 33:125-138.

Gardner, Susan and Benita Barnes. 2007. "Graduate Student Involvement: Socialization for the Professional Role." *Journal of College Student Development* 48(4):1-19.

Gasman, Marybeth, Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin, Sibby Anderson-Thompkins, Lisa Rasheed, and Karry Hathaway. 2004. "Negotiating Power, Developing Trust: Transgressing Race and Status in the Academy." *Teachers College Record 106*(4), 689–715.

Gee, James Paul. 2000. "Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education." *Review of Research in Education* 25:99-125.

Gentile, Brittany, Shelly Grabe, Brenda Dolan-Pascoe, Jean M. Twenge, Brooke E. Wells, and Alissa Maitino. 2009. "Gender Differences in Domain-Specific Self-Esteem: A Meta-Analysis." *Review of General Psychology* 13(1):34-45.

Goodman, Rachel D. and Cirecie A. West-Olatunji. 2010. "Educational Hegemeony, Traumatic Stress, and African American and Latino American Students." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 38:176-186.

Grande, Sandy. 2000. "American Indian Identity and Intellectualism: The Quest for a New Red Pedogogy." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13(4):343-359.

Granfield, Robert. 1991. "Making it by Faking it: Working-Class Students in an Elite Academic Environment." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 20:331-351.

Guillory, Raphael and Mimi Wolverton. 2008. "It's About Family: Native American Student Persistence in Higher Education." *The Journal of Higher Education* 79(1):58-87.

Hall, Roberta M. and Bernice Sandler. 1984. "*Out of the Classroom: A Chilly Campus Climate for Women?*" Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges. Washington DC.

Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2007. "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm." *Perspectives on Politics* 5(1):63-79.

Hart, Jeni. 2006. "Women and Feminism in Higher Education Scholarship: An Analysis of Three Core Journals" *The Journal of Higher Education* 77(1): 40-61.

Harvey, Joan C. 1981. "The Imposter Phenomenon and Achievement: A Failure to Internalize Success." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 42:4969B.

Holmes, Sarah W., Les Kertay, Lauren B. Adamson, C.L. Holland, and Pauline Rose Clance. 1993. "Measureing the Imposter Phenomenon: A Comparison of Clance's IP Scale and Harvey's I-P Scale." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 60(1): 48-59.

Horn, Laura, and Anne-Marie Nuñez. 2000. *Mapping the Road to College First-Generation Students' Math Track, Planning Strategies, and Context of Support*. DIANE Publishing.

Hulko, Wendy. 2009. "The Time and Context-Contingent Nature of Intersectionality and Interlocking Oppressions." *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 24(1):44-55.

Ishitani, Terry. 2006. "Studying Attrition and Degree Completion Behavior Among First-Generation College Students." *The Journal of Higher Education* 77(5): 861-885.

Jackson, Peter, and Jan Penrose, eds. 1994. *Constructions of Race, Place, and Nation*. , Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Jackson, Aaron, Steven Smith and Curtis Hill. 2003. "Academic Persistence Among Native American College Students." *Journal of College Student Development* 44(4):548-565.

Jacobs, Jerry A. 1996. "Gender Inequality and Higher Education." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:153-185.

Janz, Teresa A. and Sandra W. Pyke. 2000. "A Scale to Assess Student Perceptions of Academic Climates." *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 30(1): 89-122.

Jones, Sandra J. 2003. "Complex Subjectivities: Class, Ethnicity, and Race in Women's Narratives of Upward Mobility" *Journal of Social Issues* 59(4):803-820.

Jones, Sandra J. 1998. "Subjectivity and Class Consciousness: The Development of Class Identity." *Journal of Adult Development* 5(3):145-162.

Jones, Susan R. 2009. "Constructing Identities at the Intersections: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Multiple Dimensions of Identity" *Journal of College Student Development* 50(3):287-304.

Jones, Susan R. and Marylu K. McEwen. 2000. "A Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity." *Journal of College Students Development* 41:405-414.

Jones, Susan R., Vasti Torres, and Jan Arminio. 2006. *Negotiating the Complexities of Qualitative Research in Higher Education: Fundamental Elements and Issues.* New York: Routledge.

Jordan-Zachery, Julia S. 2007. "Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who is Black? A Few thoughts on the Meaning of Intersectionality." *Politics and Gender* 3(2):254-263.

Jostl, Gregor, Evelyn Bergsmann, Marko Luftenegger, Barbara Schober and Christiane Spiel. 2012. "When Will They Blow My Cover? The Imposter Phenomenon Among Austrian Doctoral Students." *Zeitschrift fur Psychologie* 220(2):109-120.

Kao, Grace and Jennifer S. Thompson. 2003. "Racial and Ethnic Stratification in Educational Achievement and Attainment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:417-442.

King, Patricia M. and Marcia B. Baxter Magolda. 2005. "A Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity." *Journal of College Student Development* 46(6):571-592.

King, Julie E. and Eileen Cooley. 1995. "Achievement Orientation and the Imposter Phenomenon among College Students." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 20:304-312.

Kolligian, John and Robert J. Sternberg. 1991. "Perceived Fraudulence in Young Adults: Is There an 'Imposter Syndrome'?" *Journal of Personality Assessment* 56 (2):308-326.

Kumar, Shamala and Carolyn M Jagacinski. 2006. "Imposters Have Goals Too: The Imposter Phenomenon and its Relationship to Achievement Goal Theory." *Personality and Individual Differences* 40:147-157.

Langford, Joe and Pauline Rose Clance. 1993. "The Imposter Phenomenon: Recent Research Findings Regarding Dynamics, Personality and Family Patterns and their Implications for Treatment." *Psychotherapy* 30(3):495-501.

Lawler, Steph. 1999. "Getting Out and Getting Away: Women's Narratives of Class Mobility." *Feminist Review* 63:3-24.

Leckie, Gloria. 1996. "They Never Trusted Me to Drive: Farm Girls and the Gender Relations of Agricultural Information Transfer." *Gender, Place and Culture* 3:309-325.

Little, Jo. 1999. "Otherness, Representation and the Cultural Construction of Rurality." *Progress in Human Geography* 23(3):437-442.

Little, Jo and Ruth Panelli. 2003. "Gender Research in Rural Geography." *Gender Place, and Culture* 10(3):281-289.

Locks, Angela M., Sylvia Hurtado, Nicholas A. Bowman and Leticia Osegura. 2008. "Extending Notions of Campus Climate and Diversity to Students' Transition to College." *The Review of Higher Education* 31(3):257-285.

Mack, Nancy. 2006. "Ethical Representation of Working-Class Lives: Multiple Genres, Voices and Identities." *Pedagogy* 6(1):53-78.

Margolis, Eric and Mary Romero. 1993. "The Department is Very Male, Very White, Very Old, and Very Conservative: The Functioning of the Hidden Curriculum in Graduate Sociology Departments." *Harvard Educational Review* 68(1): 1-33.

McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1771-1800.

McCann, Carol R., and Seung-Kyung Kim (Eds.). 2002. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives.* New York: Routledge.

McGregor, Loretta Neal, Damon E. Gee, and K. Elizabeth Posey. 2008. "I Feel Like a Fraud and it Depresses Me: The Relation between the Imposter Phenomenon and Depression." *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 36(1): 43-48.

McIntosh, Peggy. 1988. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Center for Research on Women. Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA.

Morris, LaDonna K. 2003. "The Chilly Climate for Women: A Literature Review." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Biloxi, MS.

Mullen, Ann. 2012. "The Not-So-Pink Ivory Tower." *Contexts* 11:34-38.

Museus, Samuel D. and Quaye, Stephen J. 2009. "Toward an Intercultural Perspective of Racial and Ethnic Minority College Student Persistence." *The Review of Higher Education* 33(1): 67-94.

Neff, Kristin D. 2003. "The Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion." *Self and Identity* 2: 223-250.

Nelson, Mary Lee, Matt Englar-Carlson, Sandra C. Tierney and Julie M. Hau. 2006. "Class Jumping Into Academia: Multiple Identities for Counseling Academics." Journal of *Counseling Psychology* 53(1):1-14.

Nicholson-Crotty, Jill and Kenneth J. Meier. 2003. "Politics, Structure, and Public Policy: The Case of Higher Education." *Educational Policy* 17(1):80-97.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's*. New York: Routledge.

Orbe, Mark. 2008. "Theorizing Multidimensional Identity Negotiation: Reflections on the Lived Experiences of First-Generation College Students." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 120:81-95.

Oriel, Kathy, Mary Beth Plane and Marlon Mundt. 2004. "Family Medicine Residents and the Imposter Phenomenon." *Family Medicine* 36(4):248-252.

Ostrove, Joan and Elizabeth Cole. 2003. "Privileging Class: Toward a Critical Psychology of Social Class in the Context of Education." *Journal of Social Issues* 59(4):667-692.

Pascarella, Ernest, Christopher T. Pierson, Gregory C. Wolniak, and Patrick T. Terenzini. 2004. "First-Generation College Students: Additional Evidence on College Experiences and Outcomes." *The Journal of Higher Education* 75 (3): 249-284.

Patton, Lori D. and Symone L. Simmons. 2008. "Exploring Complexities of Multiple Identities of Lesbians in a Black College Environment." *The Negro Educational Review* 59(3-4):197-215.

Pelias, Ronald J. 2003. "The Academic Tourist: An Autoethnography." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(3): 369-373.

Perna, Laura W. and Marvin A. Titus. 2005. "The Relationship Between Parental Involvement as Social Capital and College Enrollment: An Examination of Racial/Ethnic Group Differences." *The Journal of Higher Education* 76(5): 485-518.

Phinney, Jean S. 2008. "Bridging Identities and Disciplines: Advances and Challenges in Understanding Multiple Identities." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 120:97-109.

Phinney, Jean and Kumiko Haas. 2003. "The Process of Coping Among Ethnic Minority First-Generation College Freshman: A Narrative Approach." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 143(6):707-726.

Pini, Barbara. 2006. "A Critique of New Regional Governance: The Case of Gender in a Rural Australian Setting." *Journal of Rural Studies* 22 (4), 383–402.

Pini, Barbara. 2007. "Always an Outlaw: Daughters-in-law on Australian Family Farms." *Women's Studies International Forum 30*(1):40–44.

Pittinsky, Todd, Margaret Shih and Nalini Ambady. 1999. "Identity Adaptiveness: Affect Across Multiple Identities." *Journal of Social Issues* 55(3): 503-518.

Polson, Cheryl. 2003. "Adult Graduate Students Challenge Institutions to Change." *New Directions for Student Services* 102: 59-68.

Punch, Keith. 2005. *Introduction to Social Research.* 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Quintana, Stephen M. and Theresa A. Segura-Herrara. 2003. "Developmental Transformations of Self and Identity in the Context of Oppression." *Self and Identity* 2:269-285.

Rains, Frances V., Jo Ann Archibald, and Donna Deyhle. 2000. "Introduction: Through our Eyes and in Our Own Words." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13(4):337-342.

Reay, Diane. 2003. "A Risky Business? Mature Working-Class Women Students and Access to Higher Education." *Gender and Education* 15(3): 301-317.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 2005. "Narrative Analysis." In: *Narrative, Memory, and Everyday Life*. University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, pp. 1-7.

Risman, Barbara. 2004. "Gender as a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism." *Gender and Society* 18(4): 429-450.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann. 2002. "Negotiating the Color Line: The Gendered Process of Racial Identity Construction among Black/White Biracial Women." *Gender and Society* 16(4) :485-503.

Rood, Robert E. 2009. "Driven to Achieve: First Generation Students' Narrated Experience at a Private Christian College." *Christian Higher Education* 8:225-254.

Ross, Scott R., Jane Stewart, Molly Mugge, and Brandy Fultz. 2001. "The Imposter Phenomenon, Achievement Dispositions, and the Five Factor Model." *Personality and Individual Differences* 31:1347-1355.

Ross, Scott R and Krukowski, R. A. (2003). "The Imposter Phenomenon and Maladaptive Personality: Type and Trait Characteristics." *Personality and Individual Differences* 34(3): 477–484.

Saenz, Delia. 1994. "Token Status and Problem-Solving Deficits: Detrimental Effects of Distinctiveness and Performance Monitoring." *Social Cognition* 12(1):61-74.

Saenz, Victor B. 2010. "Breaking the Segregation Cycle: Examining Students' Precollege Racial Environments and College Diversity Experiences." *The Review of Higher Education* 34(1):1-37.

Salazar, Carmen. 2005. "Outsiders in a White, Middle-Class System: Counselor Educators of Color in Academe." *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development* 44:240-252.

Saldana, Johnny. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Sax, Linda J. 2001. "Undergraduate Science Majors: Gender Differences in Who Goes to Graduate School." *The Review of Higher Education* 24(2): 153-172.

Schroeder, Debra S. and Clifford R. Mynatt. 1993. "Female Graduate Students' Perceptions of their Interactions with Male and Female Major Professors." *The Journal of Higher Education* 64(5): 555-573.

Souto-Manning, Mariana and Nichole Ray. 2007. "Beyond Survival in the Ivory Tower: Black and Brown Women's Living Narratives." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 40(4): 280-290.

Sparkes, Andrew C. 2000. "Autoethnography and Narratives of Self: Reflections on Criteria in Action." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17(1):21-43.

Spry, Tami. 2001. "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis." *Qualitative Inquiry* 7(6):706-732.

Stanfield, John H. 2011. *Rethinking Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Stewart, Abigail J. and Joan M. Ostrove. 1993. "Social Class, Social Change, and Gender." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 17:475-497.

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park CA: Sage.

Stryker, Sheldon. 2008. "From Mead to a Structural Symbolic Interactionism and Beyond." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:15-31.

Terenzini, Patrick T., Leonard Springer, Patricia M. Yeager, Ernest T. Pascarella and Amaury Nora. 1996. "First Generation College Students: Characteristics, Experiences, and Cognitive Development" *Research in Higher Education* 37(1):1-22.

Thompson, Ted, Peggy Foreman, and Frances Martin. 2000."Impostor Fears and Perfectionistic Concern Over Mistakes." *Personality and Individual Differences* 29(4): 629-647.

Torres, Vasti, Susan R. Jones, and Kristen A. Renn. 2009. "Identity Development Theories in Student Affairs: Origins, Current Status, and New Approaches." *Journal of College Student Development* 50(6):577-596.

Tucciarone , Krista M. 2007. "Cinematic College: National Lampoon's Animal House Teaches Theories of Student Development." *College Student Journal* 41(4): 843-858.

Trotman, Frances K. 2009. "The Imposter Phenomenon Among African American Women in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education: Implications for Counseling." Pp. 77-87 In G.R. Walz, J.C. Bleuer, and R.K. Yep (Eds.), *Compelling Counseling Interventions: VISTAS 2009* Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Turner, Caroline Sotello Viernes. 2002. "Women of Color in Academe." *The Journal of Higher Education* 73(1):74-93.

Tym, Carmen, Robin McMillion, Sandra Barone and Jeff Webster. 2004. "First-Generation College Students: A Literature Review" *Research and Analytical Services* November*:1-20.*

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2012. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2011* (NCES 2012-001), Chapter 3 .

Walker, Melanie. 1998. "Academic Identities: Women on a South African Landscape." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 19(3): 335-354.

Want, Julie and Sabina Kleitman. 2006. "Imposter Phenomenon and Self-Handicapping: Links with Parenting Styles and Self-Confidence." *Personality and Individual Differences* 40:961-971.

Warburton, Edward C., Rosio Bugarin, and Anne-Marie Nunez. 2001. *Bridging the Gap: Academic Preparation and Postsecondary Success of First-Generation Students*. National Center for Education Statistics (ED) Washington DC.

Wells, Barbara. 2002. "Women's Voices: Explaining Poverty and Plenty in a Rural Community." *Rural Sociology* 67(2):234-254.

Whitt, Elizabeth J., Ernest T. Pascarella, Becki Elkins Nesheim, Brian P. Marth and Christopher T. Pierson. 2003. "Differences Between Women and Men in Objectively Measured Outcomes, and the Factors That Influence Those Outcomes, in the First Three Years of College." *Journal of College Student Development* 44(5): 587-610.

Yuval-Davis, Nancy. 2006. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Woman's Studies* 13(3):193-210.

Zamani, Eboni. 2003. "African American Women in Higher Education." *New Directions for Student Services* 104:5-18.

Zinn, Maxine Baca and Bonnie Thornton Dill.1996. "Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 22(2):321-332.

Appendix A - Interview guide

1. Taking into consideration the many aspects of identity (race/ethnicity, social class, gender, culture, family, etc.) describe who you are as a person.

      Probes: -Tell me more about your family; how and where you grew up.
                          -How would you describe your family's social class? How did you experience it? In what ways, if any, has it influenced your identity?
                          -Can you talk a little more about what being female has meant to you?
                          -In what ways have you felt different or the same as other people (ex: race/ethnicity, rural/urban, culture)? How has this influenced your identity?

2. Tell me about your educational experiences.

      Probes: -What factors were involved in your decision to go to college?
                          -How did you decide to attend a certain institution?
                          -Describe how you were able to gain admission and successfully complete college as an undergraduate.
                          -Do you feel that your experience might have been different if you were not a first generation college student? If so, in what ways would it have been different?
                          -What factors were involved in your decision to go to graduate school?
                          -Was there anything different in this choice? If so, what was different?
                          -How was your graduate experience compared to your undergraduate experience?
                          -Do you feel that your graduate experience might have been different if you were not a first generation student?
                          -In what ways have your educational experiences influenced your identity?

3. How do you define what it means to be successful? Do you see yourself as a success? If so, to what do you attribute your success?

      Probes: -Has your definition of success changed over the course of time? If so, how has it changed?
                          -How does your family define success? What types of things were you praised for when you were a child........and now as an adult?
                          -What kinds of things were you taught about being successful academically?

-(If there are siblings) In terms of academic achievement, were you ever treated differently from your siblings?

-How would you rate your academic ability compared to other graduate students in your program?

-How do you feel others, including professors, would rate your academic ability?

-What goes through your mind when you succeed academically?

-What goes through your mind when you may not have been as successful as you'd like (get a bad grade or something)?

-How has your view of personal success and the view of others influenced your identity?

Appendix B: Clance IP Scale

For each question, please circle 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.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

14. I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

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

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

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

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involve achievement.

1	2	3	4	5
(not at all true)	(rarely)	(sometimes)	(often)	(very true)

Appendix C – Permission to use Clance IP Scale

Please find attached the requested Clance IP Scale and scoring instructions. This correspondence constitutes permission to use the scale. I request that on each CIPS you use/distribute, that you have the copyright and permission information printed on each page:

Note. From The Impostor Phenomenon: When Success Makes You Feel Like A Fake (pp. 20-22), by P.R. Clance, 1985, Toronto: Bantam Books. Copyright 1985 by Pauline Rose Clance, Ph.D., ABPP. Reprinted by permission. Do not reproduce without permission from Pauline Rose Clance, drpaulinerose@comcast.net, www.paulineroseclance.com.

This clause is already on the attached CIPS copy.

If you do not want to put the name of the test or book on the scale if it may affect your research, you may leave those off and make sure to include the clause, "Under copyright. Do not reproduce without the permission of Dr. Pauline Rose Clance."

For research purposes, I also request that you send a citation and abstract/results summary of your work to me when you are completed with your research to add to the IP reference list.

For IP presentation purposes, I request that you send me a brief summary (i.e., couple of sentences) of participant (and your own) feedback about the presentation in regard to how the Impostor Phenomenon was received.

Thank you again for your interest in the Impostor Phenomenon. Please e-mail me that you agree with these conditions. You may refer participants to my website (www.paulineroseclance.com) for any interest in viewing IP articles and for my contact information.

Best,

Pauline Rose Clance, Ph.D., ABPP

Appendix D – Demographic questions

Below are some demographic questions to assist in clarifying group outcomes. Please keep in mind that this information is only reported in the aggregate, and cannot be used to identify any individual respondent.

1. What is your age (please note number of years)? _____

2. Do you self-identify as Hispanic or Latino? Yes/ No

3. Which best describes your primary racial identity?
    Black or African-American
    Asian or Asian-American
    White or European American
    Native American or Alaska Native
    Pacific Islander
    Two or more races

4. What was your family's approximate yearly income when you were in high school?
    < 20,000
    20,001-35,000
    35,001-50,000
    50,001-75,000
    75,001-100,000
    100,001-150,000
    150,001-200,000
    > 200,000

5. What is your mother's highest education level?
Not a HS grad/ HS grad or equivalent/ some college, AA or vocational degree/ Bachelor's degree/ Master's degree/ Doctorate or Professional degree

6. What is your father's highest education level?
Not a HS grad/ HS grad or equivalent/ some college, AA or vocational degree/ Bachelor's degree/ Master's degree/ Doctorate or Professional degree

7. What is the approximate population of the community in which you attended high school?
    < 10,000
    10,001-25,000
    25,001-50,000
    50,001-75,000
    75,001-100,000
    > 100,000

8. Are you a U.S. citizen? Yes/No

If not, in what country do you have citizenship? _____

Thank you for completing this survey!