

Impostor Phenomenon Among Multiracials in AgEd

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Introduction

According to the U.S. Census (2018), the United States is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before. Naturally, with more diversity in a population, a correlation occurs of intermarriage between races, ethnicities, and cultures. In 2013, one-in-ten babies born were identified as biracial - an increase of ten-times the count in 1970 (Parker, 2013). These multiracial individuals will be enrolled into agricultural education courses, so it is crucial to foster a learning environment conducive to all students.

This study shows the impostor feelings among 19 individuals who are multiracial alumni of secondary agricultural education programs across the United States. Although there is not enough information to determine if these impostor feelings are caused from being a minority within agricultural education, it is important to note this phenomenon is present among multiracial students across many different disciplines. The possibility of a racial discrimination experience is suggested to lead to social isolation which may precede and perpetuate cognitions of impostor phenomena, particularly at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), and thus making internal attributions or blaming themselves to make sense of this racial discrimination (Bernard et al., 2018). Similarly, to PWIs, agricultural education is primarily homogenous in its racial composition. It is important to determine if multiracial students in agricultural education experience higher levels of impostor feelings compared to their white counterparts.

Conceptual Framework

The concept of Impostor Phenomenon (IP) refers to individuals who, despite being successful according to external standards, do not experience an internal sense of success. They consider themselves “impostors.” They believe that their success has not come from their ability, but rather them having worked harder, manipulated others’ impressions of themselves, or sheer luck (Clance & Imes, 1978). The term Impostor Phenomenon was coined in 1974 by Drs. Clance and Imes to describe people that doubt their abilities and competencies. These individuals ignore all evidence of competence and feel as if they are going to be exposed as an ‘impostor’ at any time. It should be noted that actual impostors or frauds are individuals who have *intentionally* lied or used deception, resulting in success not due to their personal abilities or competence. Contrary to their personal beliefs, these individuals who experience feelings of IP are not actual impostors or frauds, but feel as if they are, and cannot internalize their successes. As a result of these feelings, they often limit their own capabilities and stay in positions that are less than their abilities (Clance, 1985).

Methodology

The researchers utilized Qualtrics to distribute the survey containing the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and several demographic information questions. Data collected from the participants using the CIPS was imported into Excel for data analysis. Total scores for all of the respondents were averaged based on demographic similarities and analyzed for frequencies within the four different score categories for Impostor Phenomenon characteristics. Twenty-one individuals completed the survey, although only 19 responses were utilized due to two of the participants misread the qualifications and were ineligible to participate due to their monoracial status. Responses from the 19 eligible participants (n=19) were obtained from the survey and used in the study.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of our study, there was evidence showing the prevalence of Impostor feelings among our multiracial participants. Those who racially identified themselves as White/Hispanic, White/Middle Eastern, White/Black, two minority races, White/Asian, White, and White/American Indian had average IP scores of 84, 77, 70, 66, 48, 48, 47 respectively. Those who identified their parents' races as White/Middle Eastern, White/Black, White/Hispanic, two minority races, White/Asian, and White American Indian had average IP scores of 77, 71, 69, 65, 48, and 37 respectively. Participants who stated their self-identity to be Hispanic, biracial, Black, and White had an average IP score of 86, 65, 60, and 48 respectively.

According to the data from the survey, we can conclude that the multiracial individuals who identified their racial makeup to be those of White/Black, White/Hispanic to be consistently high scorers of IP, with their averages being in the Frequent and Intense categories. There was only one participant of White/Middle Eastern descent, so their high score would be hard to prove if this score is typical of the demographic. Participants who identified solely as White, either racially or as their self-identifier, consistently had lower average scores of Impostor Phenomenon. Thus, it is easy to conclude that those in the survey who identify with a minority racial status have higher feelings of IP than those who identify with a White racial status.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research are to evaluate the correlation between racial salience and impostor phenomena as half of the participants with more than two races had the lowest impostor phenomenon score. Future research should be conducted to determine the effects of racial saliency on impostor phenomena. Further research analyzing racial minorities in fields with racial homogeneity may lead to answers regarding multiracial impostor phenomenon compared to white counterparts to explore if the lack of diversity is a possible cause of impostor feelings.

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