

Anonymized

ENWR 1510-15

Prof. Nobles

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Variables that Affect Levels of Imposter Syndrome

I began the Unit with the following questions:

- 1) What is imposter syndrome?
- 2) Are there variables that affect the level of imposter syndrome that an individual feels?

I then refined these questions into several in-depth questions:

- 1) How does being a first-generation student affect the level of imposter syndrome felt?
- 2) How does being an out-of-state student affect the level of imposter syndrome felt?
- 3) How does being a woman affect the level of imposter syndrome felt?
- 4) How does being a person of color affect the level of imposter syndrome felt?
- 5) How does having to pay for your own college affect the level of imposter syndrome felt?
- 6) How does being home for the semester as student affect the level of imposter syndrome felt?

In order to get the answers to my questions, I first had to look deeper into what imposter syndrome actually is, and how it is developed. I then continued my search and looked into what variables would affect imposter syndrome at different levels. I started to ask myself what would cause the greatest feeling of imposter syndrome within an individual.

Peer Review Article #1

I started on the library database to gain information regarding imposter syndrome. Through the data I found a peer review article entitled *Rethinking Imposter Syndrome* (Slank). With this

article I got an understanding of what imposter syndrome actually is. This source is relatively new dating in February 2019. The source is from an Ethical Theory journal that discusses many mental health situations. This one I found interesting as it talks about the basis of imposter syndrome starting with the psychologists, Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes, who named the phenomenon, and how it is said to be “perceived fraudulence”. This source got me thinking about my main point of the research, which are the variables that affect imposter syndrome. This led me to the next source:

Peer Review Article #2

My second source was *Perceiving Fraudulence in Young Adults: is there an ‘Imposter Syndrome?’* (Kolligan and Steinberg). This source has the same basis of the first source with a few differences in the approach. Here John Kolligian Jr. and Robert J. Steinberg also discuss different case studies that Clance and Imes used to look at variables regarding levels of imposter syndrome. The studies conducted consisted of female students at Harvard in a predominately male classroom and women in the same classroom but the ratio of males to females was 1:1. This made me think of what other variables could factor into the ideas of imposter syndrome, which led me to my third source:

Magazine Article #1

My first magazine source was titled *First-Generation Students and Imposter Syndrome* by Emily Reynolds. Here I found more information about different variables that affect imposter syndrome. This article focuses on first-generation students in the college classroom. It follows a study that was conducted within a large STEM course at a large university in the United States. The study shows how the students who are first-generation experience a greater feeling of imposter syndrome than the students who parents went to college. The feelings of the first-

generation students consisted of negative impacts on their past and future achievements, attendance, and performance. This source talking about the negative effects of imposter syndrome made me what extent can those symptoms affect the mental state of the individual.

This led me to my fourth source:

Book #1

My first book source was curated by a neurologist, William O. Tatum IV, at the Mayo Clinic, where he discusses various neurological issues. Only one page stood out to me, which was the one regarding Capgras Syndrome. Capgras Syndrome is the mental illness that encompasses the belief that one's body has been taken over by an imposter. Capgras is a much more elevated version of imposter syndrome. It is caused by preexisting neurological conditions but can be worsened by previous feelings of imposter syndrome. At this point I finally began to realize the true extent of imposter syndrome, and how devastating it can be to an individual's mental state. I began to look at additional factors that affect imposter syndrome:

Magazine Article #2

My second magazine article was about imposter syndrome with women in the workplace, entitled *Why Imposter Syndrome Hits Women and Women of Color Harder* by Sheryl Nace-Nash. This article talks about how less women are in management positions in the workplace, which causes for a level of imposter syndrome in their jobs even though both parties are more than qualified to be in their positions. This got me thinking about the college classroom. For years, women have been pushed below men for no apparent reason. The feeling women get from these situations make them feel as if they do not belong the same way the men do. This is especially true within the college classrooms as predominately male majors will look down upon women. It makes me think of a Tiktok I saw recently about a woman trying to talk in her

business class, but every time she would open her mouth the men would interrupt her. This is something that would cause for a feeling of imposter syndrome.

Book #2

I wanted to look deeper into the variables that could affect the levels of imposter syndrome, so I found the book entitled, *Prevalence, Predictors, and Treatment of Imposter Syndrome: A Systematic Review* (Bravata). This book was compiled by a group of professors at various medical institutes about different case studies they carried out. All of them examined various factors regarding imposter syndrome such as race, religion, year in college, high school ranking, location of student, gender, and income level. All of these are important factors that affect imposter syndrome. This is when I started to compile my own study regarding imposter syndrome.

Survey

My first step of starting a study regarding imposter syndrome was making a survey through Qualtrics. I started my survey with some basic demographic questions about gender, hometown, how the student was paying for college, and if the student was on grounds this semester. I then asked various questions regarding their feelings about University of Virginia (UVA). The questions consisted of if the student felt out of place at UVA, and if the student felt like their successes in life were due to outside factors. This is a major indicator of imposter syndrome. I then asked the students to explain their answers to the imposter syndrome questions. This gave me a basis to how the first-year student body felt about imposter syndrome. I surveyed 54 students and around 44 percent of them felt some type of imposter syndrome daily. I did not get the exact responses I wanted from the survey, so I went to an empirical study.

Empirical Study

My empirical study had the same basis as the survey, but the questions were more focused on imposter syndrome. I made another survey through Qualtrics, and this time focused the questions around a psychologist questionnaire regarding imposter syndrome. I asked a series of questions that determine whether or not an individual suffers from imposter syndrome. Since I am obviously not a psychologist, I cannot officially determine whether or not someone has imposter syndrome, but I see if there are signs of imposter syndrome. Through my study I asked forty-two UVA first years about imposter syndrome and found out that thirty-eight of them exhibit signs of a certain level of imposter syndrome. From here I realized how much of an impact imposter syndrome plays within my own class, so I decided to interview two of my peers.

Interview #1

Both of the individuals I interviewed are first years at University of Virginia, who both choose to remain anonymous. My interview questions consisted of basic demographic questions and then progressed into deeper more personal questions regarding their mentality about their academics at University of Virginia. The first individual I interviewed is an out-of-state female, who has no help paying for college, and is a first-generation student living on grounds. Our conversation occurred in person on grounds, with social distancing guidelines. We talked for around thirty minutes and just discusses how she felt at UVA. She told me how much she loves the school but feels as if she does not belong as all of her peers seem to outdo her in everything. She believed that the way she got into UVA was purely on luck and her academics had nothing to do with it. She has developed a good friend group at the school, and things are going well for her socially. She also has no prior history of mental health problems.

Interview #2

I asked the same questions in this interview as I did in my first one. The second individual I interviewed was a male, in-state student, whose parents are paying for all of their college but is saying home this semester. Our conversation occurred over FaceTime for this interview since we are not in the same location. Our talk lasted for around an hour since I have known him for years, and we have not caught up in a while. He told me how he does not feel at all that he is a UVA student, since he is not on grounds. The choice for him to stay home was decided by his parents, and he had no say into the discussion. He felt as if he was left out of all the social aspects and think it will be very difficult to make friends in the spring semester. He also believes that he does not belong at UVA, and none of his successes are valid. This made me realize for some people how staying home for this semester can negatively affect their mental state leading to imposter syndrome.

Archival Material

To be quite frank, when I first arrived at UVA I felt imposter syndrome. It was very hard for me to be at home for a couple weeks, while all of my friends were away at their other schools. I knew UVA was the right school for me, but it really got me questioning if I belonged at the school. Arriving on grounds made the feeling get better and worst. I started to actually see how smart my peers were and caused me to question my own intelligence. I was able to talk to people about their same feelings and realize I was not alone with my emotions. One thing that helps me when I start to doubt my abilities is a little white rock, I have in my dorm room. All of my closest friends from home have similar ones that we took from an ice cream shop we went to on our last night together before college. We all brought the rocks to our schools and keep them in

our dorm rooms. The rock shows me that regardless of how things are and even when I doubt myself, I belong here.

Refined Topic

For my unit three paper I will be going with the title “Factors of Perceived Fraudulence” because it embodies the ideas of my paper. Another name for imposter syndrome is perceived fraudulence. My main idea of my paper will be “People can typically feel like an outsider, especially in a new environment. Which factors cause a greater feeling of being an outsider and how do those factors increase the feelings of imposter syndrome?”

Word Count- 1884

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