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TWO IDENTITIES TWO IMPOSTORS ONE STUDENT

by

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SYNTHESIS*

MASTER OF ARTS

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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Advisor: Robert Ricketts

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

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ABSTRACT

Imposter Syndrome is a well-known psychological phenomenon characterized by a persistent feeling of inadequacy despite evidence of competence and success. While current research has identified five types of Impostor Syndrome, This synthesis offers the existence of an additional impostor type. This study aims to investigate the existence of "Impostor Two-Two-One" (ITTO), where college students coming from underrepresented backgrounds develop multiple social identities in which each social identity carries different fears of being exposed as a fraud or impostor. Data was collected in the form of structured interviews with students who identify as a combination of first-generation, low-income, and students of color. Results were analyzed using a qualitative case study approach to identify common themes related to the existence of this additional impostor type. In addition to the case study approach the results were also analyzed using the author's years of professional experience, life experiences, and developed skills as a reflective practitioner gained during his studies as a graduate student of UMass Boston's Critical and Creative Thinking program. The study aims to critically examine the effects of Impostor syndrome on college campuses, and document first-hand accounts of ITTO and its impact on specific student groups' well-being. The findings of this study are meant to provide information for future accessible digital resources for college students and to supply concerned institutions with effective methods of student support.

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Introduction

The room is full of college students returning from holiday break, you can feel their excitement and energy that is emitted from their continued rising volume, a volume that ultimately becomes subdued because of the phrase, “Ayo!, yeah, I have been home for too long, I really need to calm down!”. This comment is light-hearted in nature but for those in the room, the phrase is an opening gambit that instigates an internal reflection of self and an instantaneous evaluation of their current behavior. A type of reflection that causes a subconscious resurrection of a subliminal version of themselves that they have metaphorically and intentionally left on campus. A version of themselves that heavily considers the physical surroundings in conjunction with an established conception of the social atmosphere. Ultimately resulting in an identity transformation that socializes and behaves in a manner deemed acceptable by the majority of the immediate population. The instinctual response to this comment was laughter but in all actuality, it carries very complicated undertones as the fear of being exposed as an impostor emerges.

Throughout my fifteen years of service at the very same historic elite liberal arts institution that these students attend, I have become very well acquainted with this situation. During my initial years at the institution, I found myself in very similar circumstances. I was a young Latin American who spent his whole life living on section eight and food stamps, inspired by the lyrics of such individuals as Biggie Smalls and Tupac. I hid aspects of myself from co-workers and supervisors. I feared the day they ever realized that I wasn't supposed to be there. When I showed up for my shifts I answered supervisors with a “No Sir”- “Yes Sir” and made sure that I didn't use any slang. Enunciating specific words felt as though I was oozing with fakeness. Despite this fakeness, I knew I needed this job, my family needed me to have this job. The feelings of necessity made it easier to come to terms with the assumption that if I was going

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to remain employed on this campus I was going to need to do everything in my power to blend in.

As years went by I began to be very observant of the people who worked at the institution as well as the type of student who generally attended it. This is what is often referred to in academia as a predominantly white institution or PWI and a very wealthy one at that. I can vividly recall how they spoke about money and how foreign it sounded to me. I was paying for gas with quarters and nickels that I could scrounge off the floor and they were debating such trivial things as which amusement park was superior between Disneyworld and Disneyland. I remember the looks of pure judgment when I chimed in to say “Wait, Disney World and Disneyland are two different places?”.

What I didn't realize then that I have come to cherish now is that the perspective that I was refining was going to be highly valued in years to come. As I was making my way through employment opportunities on a micro level, the country on a macro level was being forced to observe its dark past and acknowledge the systemic racist structures that were currently in place. Essentially, keeping people like me from places like this. In an effort to right some of these injustices, Institutions such as the elite liberal arts institution in question answered the call of diversifying their campuses with newly created admission initiatives and the erection or bolstering of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion departments.

Though in the words of Harvard professor Anthony Jack, “ Access aint inclusion” (TEDxCambridge, 2019). College campuses were, in fact, diversifying their campuses but the support of these students fell off dramatically once they made it past the front gate. Students came to the campus seeking the same elite education that lent itself to so many wealthy alumni

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who came before them. Unfortunately what they were exposed to was a debilitating sense of culture shock and high levels of feelings of inadequacy. Perhaps one bright spot about the situation was that many of these students received substantial financial aid packages that paid for all or the bulk of their education. That being said, even though most of the education was covered many of these students sought out student employment opportunities.

It's through student employment that their and my path were destined to cross. As a supervisor, my shifts filled up fairly quickly in response to the exponential growth of the diverse student body. In the eyes of many students, I became an informal mentor, during shifts and even outside of shifts students would seek out my opinion on what felt like a never-ending list of aspects of the college. There was a real sense of trust and I completely understood where they were coming from. Though it wasn't until one day when I read a line from a handwritten note given to me by a graduating senior that expressed "Without you, I never would have made it". This type of sentiment and variations of it are often shared between seniors and people who have meant something to them during their academic journey but this was different. The note spoke about her struggles on campus but additionally, it spoke about her struggles in high school. She dealt with severe depression and anxiety which led her to try to take her own life shortly before showing up on campus as a first-year.

I'll never forget the feeling that washed over me after I read the note but It changed my life. Since then I have tirelessly worked to support those who do not feel supported and to provide a voice for those who feel they cannot speak. Acknowledging these efforts, The institution in its very lengthy and historic existence, I am the only employee to receive two employee recognition awards. The first award was presented to me in 2015 for my work with students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In 2018, I received the second

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recognition award for my work with international students, more specifically students from Kenya. In 2019, I was given the honor of being the first person to be presented with a newly minted Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion award and was selected as an honorary graduate of the class of 2019.

Currently, armed with years of professional, personal, and educational experience, I have set my sights on uncovering a unique aspect of the impostor syndrome that steps away from its most traditional principles. Stepping away from the broad term “diverse student body” the majority of students I have mentored throughout my career predominantly identify as a combination of first-generation, low-income, and students of color. They have identified themselves as one or even all three of these identities. Students who come from an array of backgrounds that breaks away from the stereotypical depiction of the type of student that is normally associated with this campus.

It's been explained to me in several different variations over the years that it's not just on campus where they feel they need to make adjustments to appear more acceptable to the immediate population but they additionally undergo a very similar process when they return home. Essentially as students return home they begin to feel pressure to recreate or revert their identity in such a way that they are received far easier by friends and family. There is a fear of being rejected by those who they hold in the closest regard.

In either location, students deal with constant pressures to change who they are so that they can fit into their surroundings. This a feeling that often leaves students filled with anxiety because at any point in time whether they are at home or on campus they could be socially rejected and exposed as a fake, as an imposter.

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Fundamentally, we are dealing with two different senses of identity and the creation of two different imposters within the same student. This constant struggle for identity becomes the source of various forms of anxiety and depression for these college students. It's through this vein that I must recognize that this experience is not limited to the populations of students I have worked with but college students in the wider sense have dealt with this or similar issues. Though what separates the students I have worked with is that they are students that are attending an institution that historically students of similar race, economic status, and social status have not attended. The feelings that have been expressed over the years acknowledge these differences as a catalyst to their internal struggles of understanding who they are in their education and home life.

It also must be acknowledged that the imposter experience is a psychological construct, not a diagnosable syndrome. This construct is complex and oftentimes can be found to be very apparent in our own lives. As we begin this journey into this concept, its history, and its various forms will be explained. In conjunction with this foundational information, qualitative data will be collected from college students who can provide critical insight on this subject. My perspective as a reflective practitioner and twelve years of experience working in the collegiate field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will assist in interpreting this information. The purpose of this writing is to provide the context for creating a living digital resource that can be accessed by college students affected by this unique aspect of the imposter experience and to provide general information for those hoping to support these students.

The Impostor Experience

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The term Impostor Syndrome or Impostor Experience, originally referred to as the “Imposter Phenomenon”, was first coined in the 1970s by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes. In a five-year psychological study titled, *The Impostor Phenomenon In High Achieving Women: Dynamics And Therapeutic Intervention*(1978), they engaged in:

“Individual psychotherapy, theme-centered interactional groups, and college classes with over 150 highly successful women — women who have earned Ph.D.'s in various specialties, who are respected professionals in their fields, or who are students recognized for their academic excellence. ((P. R. Clance & S. A.Imes, 1978, p. 241)

Through their research, it was concluded that:

“Despite their earned degrees, scholastic honors, high achievement on standardized tests, praise and professional recognition from colleagues and respected authorities, these women do not experience an internal sense of success They consider themselves to be "impostors."(P. R. Clance & S. A.Imes, 1978, p. 241)

Based on this initial work conducted by Clance and Imes, the Imposter Phenomenon was a term used to define an internal experience of intellectual phoniness that appeared to be prevalent among high-achieving women. Together Clance and Imes did not ultimately dismiss that the Imposter Phenomenon affected men but that their research implied that the Impostor Phenomenon would be “found less frequently in men than in women” (P. R. Clance & S. A.Imes, 1978, p. 241). They further explained that when men appeared to be affected by the phenomenon, It was with men that were more in touch with their "feminine" qualities.

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Fundamentally like all research, variables are constantly changing and information is destined to evolve. Based on how Clance and Imes conducted their research it was fair for them to make their assessment about men but psychologists currently working in the field now recognize that it affects far more people than just high-achieving women. It particularly affects “those who find it hard to internalize their achievements or recognize the good parts of themselves” (Hibberd, 2019,p. 28-29).

A psychologist who is considered an expert in the field and author of the book, *The Imposter Cure: Escape the Mind-Trap of Imposter Syndrome*, Dr. Jessamy Hibberd explains: About 70 percent of people have felt some degree of imposter syndrome and it is something almost everyone can relate to. It can harm people from all walks of life, affects both men and women and occurs across different cultures. It affects those in academic settings – undergrads, mature students, PhD students and even professors. Imposter syndrome is common in all work settings, especially highly competitive business cultures in which performance is constantly under scrutiny and competition is encouraged. (Hibberd, 2019, p.29)

Removing any group specificity on a basic definition of Impostor syndrome, it can be deduced that Impostor syndrome is a psychological phenomenon in which individuals doubt their own abilities, talents, and accomplishments and have a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud.

The Five

As explained before, information on the Impostor Experience has progressed since the 1970s. This was due largely in part to such experts in the field as Dr. Valerie Young. Dr. Valerie

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Young, co-founder of Impostor Syndrome Institute and author of *The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It*, discovered after facilitating Impostor Syndrome workshops with tens of thousands of people that those who identified as impostors experience failure-related shame in different ways. She also noticed that there was a variance in the ideals of what it means to be a competent person. This concept of identifying what is competency appears to play a significant role in how the Impostor Experience manifested in people's lives. Inspired by this Dr. Valerie Young presented the concept of the “uncovered five ‘competence types’”(Young, 2022). She observed that people who affected by the Impostor Experience generally fall into the following catagoires:

- 1. The Perfectionist**

- 2. The Expert**

- 3. The Soloist**

- 4. The Natural Genius**

- 5. The Super Human**

These five competence types are more commonly known as the five types of Impostor Syndrome. In the infographic below created by the Institute of Impostor Syndrome, we can observe a few unique characteristics that each type of Impostor Syndrome expresses.

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FIGURE 1. FIVE IMPOSTER TYPES (Impostor Syndrome Institute, 2022)



The Origins of The Impostor Experience

After reviewing the five types of Imposter Syndrome It can be observed that Imposter Syndrome can manifest within our lives in several ways. Though before Impostor Syndrome can mature into any of these competence types Its has to develop a starting point within ourselves. Intuitively this brings up the question, How does someone develop Impostor Syndrome? Imposter syndrome can often be narrowed down to a particular point when a person has accomplished an achievement, participates in approval-related tasks, feelings insecure about their knowledge or skills, works in a competitive atmosphere, or find themselves in a position where

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responsibilities have increased. It can become quite prevalent during times of transition or change, or when a person faces new challenges. Challenges that force people out of their comfort zone, puts them into new routines or create feelings that they are now under some sort of increased scrutiny. Dr. Jessamy Hibberd explains that “ Imposter syndrome normally occurs when there is a tension between two views – yours and what you believe others expect of you. Or the tension could be between the standards you set yourself and how you assess yourself as doing. (Hibberd, 2019,p. 35).

Once Impostor Syndrome has manifested itself within people's lives, Pauline Rose Clance author of the scholarly works titled, *Impostor Phenomenon in an Interpersonal/social context: Origins and Treatment*, explains that Impostor Syndrome tends to operate in patterns or cycles. In her article, she highlights that people who are affected by Impostor Syndrome tend to initiate tasks with either extreme overpreparation, or with initial procrastination followed by frenzied preparation. This is because someone who is struggling with Impostor Syndrome will find themselves filled with feelings of self-doubt and anxiety that are in response to the new task. Regardless of the initial starting point If the task is achieved successfully, a person experiencing Impostor Syndrome would happily take the accomplishment and breathe a sigh of relief. Though

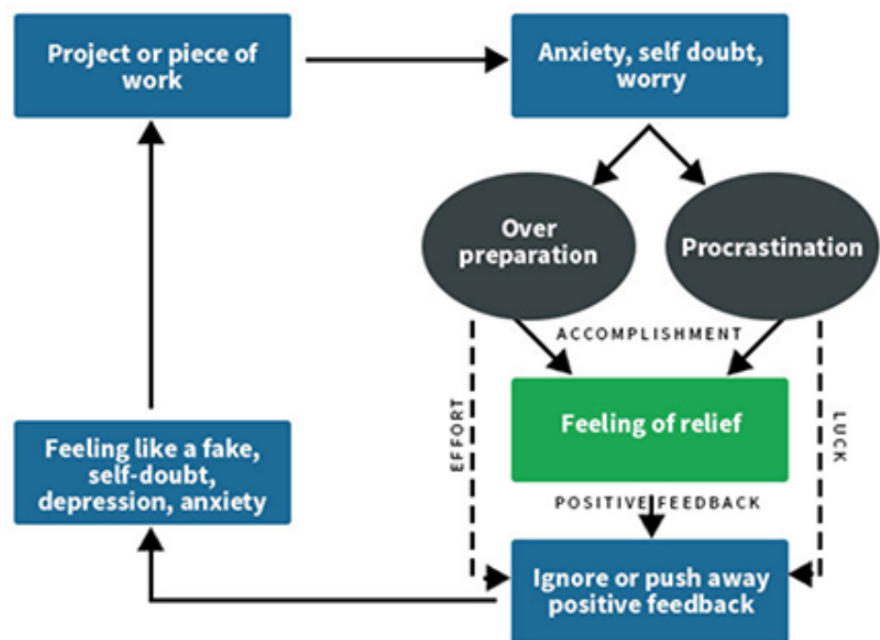
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unfortunately then the cycle begins a new once a new task is encountered, and the feelings of self-doubt and anxiety return. The chart below illustrates this cycle.

Figure 2. The Imposter Phenomenon cycle (Clance et al., 1995)

The
Impostor
College

The Imposter Cycle



Experience

This concept of a transitional period in someone's life can be directly associated with the transition students make every year when they transition from their respective high schools into

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college. According to a study published in the Journal of Vocational Behavior by Brigham Young University professors Jeff Bednar, Bryan Stewart, and James Oldroyd, “revealed that 20 percent of the college students in their research suffered from very strong feelings of impostorism” (Bednar, Stewart, & Oldroyd, Volume 115, 2019). It is common for students to experience feelings of being an impostor during their college experience, particularly in situations where they are surrounded by high-achieving peers or faced with challenging academic expectations. First-year college students often carry the weight of a fear of failure. Not only do they have a fear of failure but there is a fear of the consequences of not meeting expectations. These feelings of fraudulency amongst college students “has been associated with anxiety, depression, excessive worry, fear of negative evaluation, poorer mental health, and diminished self-esteem” (Cokley et al., 2013).

In my experience, students commonly speak about how they feel like they don't belong. Students have even gone as far as explaining that they feel like they don't belong in college in general, despite being accepted and meeting the academic requirements. A common link among the students I've observed expressing these types of sentiments is that they are usually students coming from underrepresented backgrounds.

Impostor Syndrome and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

The impostor experience is not an entity that roams campus grounds specifically targeting different types of student groups and ensuring they will have the most difficult time during their four years of undergraduate studies. As explained by Dr. Jessamy Hibberd, feelings of being an Impostor are common in just about everyone, whether that's currently or for a duration of time. College students are no exception to this, any college student can find themselves struggling with

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inner turmoil caused by Impostor Syndrome. Though what is becoming more evident is that Impostor Syndrome affects specific student groups on college campuses differently, student groups such as first-generation, low-income, and students of color. The exact same student groups from whom I engage daily and have mentored over the years.

Before moving forward it is important to clarify who these student groups are. First-generation college students are individuals who are the first in their families to go to college. These students are more likely to be of racial/ethnic minorities and come from lower-income families; and rely on grants, scholarships, and loans (Gibbons et al., 2019). The Pell Institute, an organization that conducts research and analysis to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for low-income, first-generation, and disabled college students defines low-income status as “having an annual household income under \$25,000” (Tito, 2004). Lastly, the term “students of color” is often synonymously with “minority students”. Students of color include those who are Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Indigenous /Alaska Native, and of two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

Given all the adversity faced by these specific student groups on college campuses, why is it that these students are affected by the impostor experience differently than anyone else? A recently published article in the *Journal of Latinos and Education* titled, *Latinx College Students’ Strategies for Resisting Imposter Syndrome at Predominantly White Institutions* explains:

“Initial conceptualizations accounted for the feelings associated with the phenomenon, specifically, common views framed the phenomenon as a personal flaw and deficit within the person themselves. In contrast, recent work portrays imposter syndrome as a result of oppressive societal systems, producing inequities negatively impacting the lives of people who are racially

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minority (Ramos & Wright-Mair 2021) Within the context of higher education, research illuminates both structural inequities linked to imposter syndrome and consequences resulting from experiencing the phenomenon, with particular attention to the experiences of racially minoritized students (Dueñas, 2021) and first-generation students (Inman & Mayes, 1999)”

This a profound development in the field of the Impostor Experience because essentially the impostor that develops within these students “is a byproduct stemming from systemic racism, heteronormativity, sexism, ableism, classism, and other hegemonic ideologies and systems of oppression (Andrews, 2020). The impostor in this sense is not a development of feeling unworthy of any accomplishments but a reaction to how society has presented itself to these students. It is through personal and professional experience that I am suggesting there is an additional type of the Impostor experience that exists outside of the five originally coined by Dr. Valerie Young.

Impostor Two-Two-One (ITTO) VS THE FIVE

ITTO occurs when a person develops multiple social identities in which each social identity carries different fears of being exposed as a fraud. In Dr. Valerie Young’s concept of the five different types of impostors, a summarized connection between them is that people who feel like impostors hold themselves to an unrealistic and unsustainable standard of competence, and ultimately falling short of these standards evokes shame. It's this crucial aspect that separates what I am proposing in ITTO and Dr. Valerie Young’s Five types. ITTO is not necessarily about a person's competence. Though the student situations that inspired the concept of ITTO may lend themselves to the involvement of how students view their competency levels on campus. It's the student's views on who they are socially that are put into focus. The social atmosphere on

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campus reveals itself to these students in a way where they feel pressured to conform or augment who they are. The second aspect is that when students return home after being on campus they feel they need to socially revert themselves in order to be acknowledged by family and friends. A commonality between ITTO and the five types is that regardless of identified type each of them carries the fear of being exposed. Regardless of which type of impostor type someone is demonstrating they believe they are actively fooling everyone.

Interviews - Methods - Findings

Outside of literature reviews and my own perspective, I sought the perspective of college students who identify as a combination of first-generation, low-income, and students of color. Their perspective is invaluable to the concept because their responses provide key insights into the validation of ITTO. I conducted eight interviews with students who currently attend a wealthy private liberal arts institution. Each interview was conducted digitally and recorded.

The interviews were designed using a qualitative case study approach. I was interested in their individual experiences and opinions of ITTO as well as their general experiences with Impostor Syndrome. Prior to each interview, I sent each interviewee an informational packet that provided an explanation of Impostor Syndrome, the five types, and a brief explanation of ITTO. The intention was for each question to serve as more of a conversational piece to get a more authentic and in-depth response. In an attempt to keep a safe space for interviewees, I expressed that I would not share their identities or name the institution in writing. Lastly, I encourage each interviewee to answer the question in their preferred voice. Essentially if they wanted to use slang or swear to answer any question they were free to do so.

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After reviewing and compiling all the information I was able to distinguish some interesting themes found in their answers. The first theme that emerged was that each interviewee had never heard of Impostor Syndrome before college. Many of them explained that the first time they came across it was during their college acceptance process. One interviewee explained,

“ The first time I heard of it specifically was through a bunch of pamphlets the college sent. There was a bunch of POC all over it and the majority of the information was about low-income backgrounds” (Anonymous, Interview 6, 2023). In terms of reference POC is an acronym standing for people of color.

What I found most intriguing about this wasn't the fact that none of them heard about Impostor Syndrome before college but that the college sent them information on it before they arrived on campus. Based on the response of the interviewee above the information was geared toward low-income students and students of color. This leaves me wondering if the campus only sent these pamphlets to specific students or did they send them to all incoming students. Impostor Syndrome has the capability to affect any student at any point throughout their academic journey. Keeping this in mind I am curious about the process the campus uses to determine what information should be sent to students and what it looks like. In terms of ITTO, I want to create digital resources for students to be able to access the information at any point in time. Since many of these students explained that they did not come across information on Impostor Syndrome until they enter the college acceptance process perhaps in addition to a digital resource, physical infographics may need to be created and mailed.

Another theme that emerged from their answers was the way each student explained their experience with Impostor syndrome while on campus. This first similarity was timing, each

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instance appeared to happen during the first initial months of being on campus. One particular recollected instance piqued my interest, It was explained,

“In orientation week there was like a lot of people trying to get to know each other. A lot of the freshmen would be like “Oh I went to XYZ private school” another person would be like “oh you went there?” “that's a crazy school, do you know X Y and Z? It's not a common thing for kids from my school to even go to college. so it's just like a big shift seeing people like being real comfortable in that situation...in that environment. that was really shocking. I felt like just had to build up some defenses- some new vocabulary to understand it to fit in” (Anonymous, Interview 1, 2023)

This concept lends itself to several aspects of ITTO. In this instance, we get an example of how the social environment imposed itself on this student and the response was to create some type of social barrier and to learn new vocabulary. An additional takeaway from this answer was understanding the importance of finding commonality with the people around you. Even the observance of seeing others finding commonality when this student could not appear to be an initial instigator of ITTO. This concept serves as an inspiration for future avenues of research on ITTO.

When asked about which of the Five Impostor Syndrome types each student identified with the most, each interviewee initially gave the same answer, all of them. I believe this speaks to the fluid nature of Impostor Syndrome. Impostor Syndrome can come in and out of our lives and can be triggered by an array of transitions. Given the social pressures that appeared to be put on these students, I am drawn to this idea of wanting to know more about the situations which pushed each of these students to fall between these different categories.

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In regard to all the questions created for these interviews, the one particular question I was most interested in was,

D4.) Based on the provided explanation of ITTO, what are your initial thoughts? What aspects of ITTO resonate with you the most? (Appendix A.)

I have spent over a decade mentoring and counseling students, bearing witness up close to their emotional struggles, and constant bouts of self-doubt. It's through these collective moments that such concepts as ITTO came into existence. ITTO is one of the multiple possible avenues of conceptualization that requires investigation that could expose unseen institutional obstacles. Obstacles that if given enough attention could be vastly diminished and in return begin the process of constructive and positive change. Though since ITTO is a conception of my own singular design the collective response to this specific question was either going to expose that my assessment is incorrect or it's where true validation lies.

According to the collective response to this question, there was no doubt of its existence and each student believed that ITTO has affected them and impacted their lives. It was noted in every interview that the general mood and energy of the interviews appeared to shift once this question was asked. Each student dove deep into self-reflection and on a few occasions it was explained that they had never shared these personal details with anyone before. Receiving this information provided me with enough substance to confirm that I was on the right track and that my chosen method of conducting these interviews created the safe space that was intended.

Interestingly enough I was given the impression that the impostor experiences on campus were considered lesser than the experiences at home. In a semi-emotional state, it was explained,

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“On campus I did a lot of things out of pure survival-Instinct. Trying to prove myself trying to fit in. Perhaps most strange or most like identity shattering-really shook me.. was when I went back for like fall break. I went back home and my friends were like “what happened to you?” like my back home closest friends asking me “What happened to you?”..... It was just like “whoa, I changed, I changed because I had to I want to fit in this place. It was like, damn. And even today it's still hard to reconcile or think about the changes that have occurred” (Anonymous, Interview 3, 2023)

Additionally, in another interview, this concept of identity reversion emerged which aligns itself with the second aspect of ITTO. When reflecting on interacting with friends from back home It was explained,

“It's like you kind of have to revert back to the way you acted in high school. I feel like when you do that it's like you have a sort of cognitive dissonance where you're acting a certain way but you realize it's not in line with like the way that you actually feel. it's kind of nerve-wracking at times.” (Anonymous, Interview 5, 2023)

Compiling all the responses to this question it was evident that there was a general consensus that ITTO is in fact a real construct of Impostor Syndrome. I had prepared myself for two possible outcomes when it came to how this question could have been answered. It was either I was going to need to take their feedback and revise ITTO or it was going to be substantiated. Though what I did not anticipate was the emotional responses and the detected sadness in their voices. Their responses provided a sense of gravity that I initially thought would only be possible from conducting far more interviews on multiple campuses. ITTO is still

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theoretical in nature but it didn't stop seven out of the eight students to openly admit that their first impression of ITTO was that it was based on their life.

Lastly, the final question of the interview asked if students were to receive some type of institutional support or assistance with dealing with ITTO, what might it look like? The inspiration behind this question was to get a sense of the type of support students feel they need from their own perspective. Fundamentally, stepping away from assumptions and getting information straight from the source.

Even though the intention behind the question appeared to be solid in its conception the compiled results painted a different picture. Students appeared to initially be staggered by this question. The most common response consisted of the creation of various forms of mentorship programs. The reasoning was that there was a general belief that guidance from a mentor could have possibly helped them when they needed assistance trying to understand the campus.

Taking notice of how each student answered this question, I followed up with an additional unscripted question. The question was, In your opinion what is it about ITTO that might make it hard for campuses to create additional resources for it? The general answer to this follow-up provided some insight as to why there was some hesitation previously. The root of the hesitations was that ITTO happens on campus as well as at home. I didn't consider this point when creating the question but found it incredibly interesting that the majority of the students had taken this detail into consideration.

Even though the compiled information on the final question didn't produce the insight it was intended to, it did create a compelling question to consider. How much support should institutions provide students while they are away from campus? Perhaps the answer to this

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question is largely based on the individual capacity of individual institutions. Capacity issues such as not having enough counseling staff to provide services for students on and off campus. Fortunately, there is a constructive way for institutions to support students dealing with ITTO. An effective method that will require institutional support but will have minimal impact on such resources as counseling centers.

Institutional Support

Taking a step back from explaining how college campuses can address ITTO specifically, let's take a larger overview of how college campuses can address Imposter Syndrome in general. Fortunately, there are several effective steps college campuses can take when supporting students struggling with Impostor Syndrome.

Based on my experience the first step any campus can take when addressing any issue is to begin normalizing it. During my interviews with students, they spoke about how the campus sent them pamphlets on Impostor Syndrome before they arrived on campus. This is one of several ways campuses can begin starting the conversation around Impostor Syndrome. In addition to pamphlets and infographics colleges can hold workshops, seminars, and events to educate students, faculty, and staff. Some methods may prove to be more effective than others but the point is to raise awareness, instill confidence, and encourage students to seek help if they believe they need it.

Another step campuses can take is to invest in mentorship programs. Although responses in the interviews I conducted about institutional support were inconsistent. Students were able to come up with an answer that revolved around the concept of some sort of on-campus mentorship. In an article written by Rachel Wiegand titled, Impostor Syndrome: What It Is and How to

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Overcome It as a Graduate Student, she explains “faculty and supervisors can create space for open dialogue among graduate students to share general information on impostor syndrome, how to recognize it, and what you can do to overcome it” (Weigand, 2021). I have mentored a large number of students during my career and have always been amazed at the impact it has made. Mentorship provides an opportunity for students to receive guidance, support, and encouragement through bonds of established trust and friendship.

Another angle in which campuses can approach supporting students is by celebrating their accomplishments. It is crucial to evaluate how the students are internalizing their achievement in their academics. Many students have shown to have difficulty accepting the grade on an assignment associated with the quality of their work (Schinske & Tanner, 2014). Many campuses already have their own established award ceremonies but they must continue to bolster the effectiveness of these awards as well as create new forms of public recognition. The arching overall goal is to help boost their confidence and self-esteem and mitigate self-doubt.

Last but not least campuses can invest in their counseling services as well as encourage self-care practices. Similar to the earlier concept of normalizing the information on Impostor Syndrome college campuses can also widely advertise what services on mental health and wellbeing that are being provided. Counseling centers can “help students understand their Imposter feelings, counselors and advisors can provide the labels and language behind the definition of the impostor phenomenon so that they can begin to recognize these feelings as they emerge. Helping students understand they are not alone in their Imposter feelings can help normalize the process and, perhaps, connect them with others who may be experiencing similar feelings” (Pulliam& Gonzalez, 2018). In terms of the types of self-care practices and

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mindfulness techniques that I have observed that have helped students manage their imposter syndrome symptoms have been yoga, meditation, and exercise.

Restorative Practice Circles and Impostor Two Two One

All previously suggested methods that campuses can utilize to support students experiencing Impostor Syndrome can also be used to support students experiencing ITTO. Though there is an aspect of ITTO where these support methods become less effective. What makes ITTO unique is that it's an experience that not only affects students on campus but also while they are away from campus. This was a detail that interviewed students in my research also noted. The point of debate here is how much support college campuses should provide students while they are away from campus. When dealing with issues around well-being and mental health and especially after the uptick of needed support for students throughout the Covid-19 pandemic institutions are very cognizant of how vital these services are. Unfortunately, the reality is that there are campuses that have the resources to extend themselves past their grounds and then there are institutions where it is simply impossible. Taking this into consideration and the duality of ITTO one of the most effective ways for college campuses to provide support is by creating a sense of community. In a more formal sense colleges can organize student clubs, events, and programs that bring students together and promote a sense of belonging. The concept behind this strategy is trying to mitigate feelings of isolation and self-doubt by using students' peers. Creating a social environment where students uplift students takes some of the burdens on campuses resources in return not only provides support for students while away from campus but even after they graduate.

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An inspirational and effective method of creating community on campuses is through the utilization of Restorative Practice Circles (RPC). In addition to several other roles I currently serve in higher education, I am also a Circle Keeper. A Circle Keeper is a trained and certified person who organizes and facilitates Restorative Practice Circles. My experience with RPCs as a facilitator and participant can only be described as powerful and transformative. Before the meetings, there is a tense energy but as this structured conversation continues to unfold you can feel the change into dialogue, a dissolving of tense energy into a decompressed social grounding.

I received my training as a Circle Keeper from Amherst College more specifically from their newly established Center of Restorative Practices. Amherst's Center of Restorative Practices explains:

“Restorative Practice Circles serve as a method or tool to foster an inclusive, engaging climate where all members have the tools and experiences necessary to engage in meaningful, restorative dialogue around community and conflict; where conflict management is not viewed as an end in and of itself, but where transforming conflict is seen as a pathway to a stronger, caring and more just community. This method is considered to be both proactive (e.g., building community, organizing meetings, and fostering collaborative decision-making) and reactive (e.g., managing conflict). As a proactive tool, restorative circles provide a safe, supportive, and structured environment for participants to deepen their connection and sense of community through collaborative learning, experiential activities, and readings. These lay the foundation for community members to address and manage harm and conflict as they arise. In response to conflict, restorative practices give voice to, and center the needs of, those who have been harmed. Instead of addressing conflict simply in an informative restorative practices focus on the

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harm done to people, relationships, and the community as a result of the conflict. Those who caused the harm are then encouraged to acknowledge, take accountability for, and address the consequences of the harm caused by their actions. The ultimate goals of restorative practices are to address and repair harm and rebuild relationships between individuals and communities when fractures do occur” (Amherst College Restorative Practice Center, 2019).

It’s important to note that Amherst College is one of only a handful of institutions that currently has a center dedicated to restorative practices. Though that doesn't mean campuses need to create their own restorative practice centers to utilize this method of community building. Institutions such as Amherst College conduct workshops and Circle Keeping training throughout the academic year. Campuses can take full advantage of this training and have members of their communities become trained Circle Keepers to facilitate these community-building circles.

RPCs' roots can be traced back to ancient indigenous traditions. Built around the time when people sat around a fire, sharing stories, solving problems, and celebrating happiness. Consistent with its roots RPCs are conducted in a similar fashion where participants are asked to sit in a circle and only those who are holding some sort of talking piece are allowed to speak. Talking pieces are items that are passed around the circle letting everyone know whose turn it is to speak. Any object that can be easily passed around can be used as a talking piece but it's preferred that talking pieces are to be selected with intent and meaning. Facilitators begin each RPC by welcoming everyone, explaining the practice, acknowledging the land, and establishing a set of standards by which all participants agree they can abide while the practice is being conducted. These standards are imperative because facilitators are trying to create what is often

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referred to in the field of dialogue as a container. Fundamentally, a space where deep reflection occurs and being vulnerable is not only encouraged but respected.

Once these initial processes are completed then begins rounds of questions. Questions that are reflective and are designed to encourage participants to engage in storytelling. Storytelling within RPCs is very crucial as each shared story invites others to get a glimpse into someone else's life. In an attempt to ease participants' nerves on how to answer each question or at the very least provide participants with a gauge of how reflective they should be facilitators will serve as active participants and go first during most question rounds. As a facilitator, this concept of going first is very important because it's through the facilitator's demonstrated level of reflective sharing and demonstrated levels of vulnerability that sets the tone for the entire RPC. It must be noted that facilitators' initial shares with the groups are also a dialogic balancing act. RPC facilitators want to create a space for deep reflective responses but not to engage in such deep reflection where participants begin to revisit past traumas in their lives. Traumas that they haven't either fully processed yet or even the mere thinking about them is triggering and instigating the process of re-traumatization.

As each question round of RPCs begins and ends the intention is that participants allow themselves to revisit their own value systems, and develop a better understanding of who they are and who they want to be in the community. An aspect of RPCs that reinforces such thinking and the most powerful round within these circles is when participants are asked to explain what resonated with them the most throughout the practice. Participants have been provided a unique opportunity to actively listen to the experiences of others and to find meaning through these shared experiences about themselves. Shortly after this, facilitators will share their final thoughts, the dialogue container is no more, and the circle commences.

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As explained earlier in this section facilitators not only facilitate RPCs but also organize them as well. In terms of organization, part of the responsibilities is to create scripts for each circle (see Appendix B.). It's through this scripting that provides an opportunity to combat ITTO straight on. Questions can be designed to ask participants about their experiences with ITTO or Imposter Syndrome in general. Utilizing RPCs to support students struggling with ITTO provides a safe space where students can hear about other students' experiences and come to the realization that they are not alone in their struggles. During my interviews with students, I found several recurring themes and in essence, the transition from recurring themes to envisioning vocalized commonalities among these students during an RPC is analogous. RPC can be utilized to address a multitude of issues on college campuses but in terms of ITTO, it provides a method that breaks down walls of destructive self-isolation and creates a network of trusted peers whom they confided in when on-campus resources are not available.

THE CCT AND LIFE JOURNEY

Based on my training and in the field practice with RPCs I identify as a Restorative Practitioner. Additionally, based on my graduate studies I also identify as a Reflective Practitioner. Throughout my childhood and adolescent years I was often put in situations where there was a need to be a highly observant individual. It was fundamentally a defense mechanism that was reinforced by family members' often warnings to "Never get caught slipping!". Essentially meaning to never getting caught by surprise by anyone or any situation. Whether It was being aware of my surroundings in certain neighborhoods while waiting for the bus or knowing when to code switch based on the people around me. It was a necessary skill I developed through life experiences but as I matured into adulthood it evolved into the ability to be highly perceptive. I pay close attention to how someone is standing, how they move, the tone

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of their voice, facial expressions, and even their eye movement. I also find myself always looking over someone's shoulder if they are standing in front of me being aware of what's going on behind them. Regrettably, people often take notice I am doing this and turn around mid-conversation to see what I am looking at. This ability of being perceptive wasn't a skill that I thought had a place in academia It was more of the by-product of what is often referred to as “street-smarts”. Though It proved to be a valuable skill set to have when mentoring students because I found myself knowing something was going on in their lives without them ever having to say it out loud. Throughout the years, students have looked at me with confusion because I would ask “What's wrong?” long before they gained the courage to say something out loud, and even on a few occasions I could sense something was off even before their closest peers could.

It wasn't an element of myself that ever lent itself to the completion of any book report or proved to be a deciding factor in how I determined the subject matter for final assignments. That all changed when I enrolled in UMass Boston’s Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) graduate program which turned those observations into fuel for constructive organizational change.

The conception of ITTO is possible because offered courses such as Critical Thinking (CRCRTH 601). Through this course, I was able to critically analyze aspects of my life and combine that with in-depth research that undoubtedly gave me a direction in my educational Journey. It essentially instilled this idea that I can change myself into a resource for others who relate to the same life experiences and need guidance. Ironically I was already doing this in so many ways serving as a mentor for students who come from under-represented backgrounds on the campus I serve.

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Unearthing connections between my life and my education continued during my experience in CCT's Creative Thinking (CRCRTH 602) course. I took away this profound concept of taking two different items or subjects and creating something new. Creating something and developing connections between the two entities required vision and imagination. Giving me the ability to reflect on hardships in my life such as when my grandmother and I used to wait in church lines for boxes of donated food. I recollected moments such as this and used that experience to understand the stigma college students feel on college campuses who come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. I was also exposed to many examples of inspirational people around the world who saw a problem in their immediate vicinities and despite all the odds and obstacles in their path, they persevered because they saw the need for necessary change.

Reflecting back on my CCT journey, two courses in particular gave me the confidence and tools needed to Identify ITTO and how to research it. These courses were Action Research for Change (CRCRTH 693) and Research and Engagement Process (CRCRTH 692). In both courses what came to the forefront of my work was how important mentorship is to me. In Action Research, I not only came up with my own hypothetical mentorship program but through the principles of Action Research I was informed of qualitative methods of conducting research that I employed when researching ITTO. Before Action Research I have always thought meaningful data only came in the form of numbers and observable progression or regression. Conducting research through more conversational means wasn't a concept I thought was valid or appreciated in the field of research. This method not only speaks to my ability to connect with people but also to collect data that aligns with my passions. Using my own observations to assess if the information I am collecting is appropriate or do I need to reevaluate my approach to the research.

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In this sense appropriate meaning that regardless if the research is disproving or substantiating my claims that the research is not veering away from its foundational conception. When working in the field of DEI there are many overarching topics and formidable subject matters that if a researcher is not vigilant in their approach instead of focusing on one aspect there is a risk of taking on one of these much larger subjects. Using ITTO as an example we are observing and researching how Impostor Syndrome manifests itself differently in the lives of college students coming from underrepresented backgrounds. This is one concentrated aspect that can be associated with the effects of systemic racism in America.

When referring back to the research that was conducted on ITTO if I began to notice that students' responses to my questions centered around their experiences with racism and less about Impostor Syndrome then my methods would have needed to be reevaluated.

This was a pitfall I fell into throughout many courses in the CCT program. I began working on a particular subject matter and it would spill into a much larger issue that often derailed my initial inquiries. It's this concept that became very evident in the Research and Engagement course but what kept everything in perspective was the realization that college campuses in so many ways are a microcosm of society. What was happening was I wasn't looking at the specific and unique situations in front of me. I was taking into consideration of all unforeseen larger powers that I don't have control over and did not truly understand my limitations. It is within my limitations to present ITTO to the world in hopes of creating a positive change in these students' lives but unfortunately, even though I truly wish I could, I don't have the capacity to end systemic racism.

Conclusion and Future Steps

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In conclusion, I want to clarify the reasoning for including my CCT journey in this synthesis to provide another layer of reference for how the concept of ITTO was generated. The inspiration for ITTO is the result of my life experience, professional experience, and educational journey coming together as I walk the path as a reflective and constructive agent of change. There is also the hope that someone who can relate to many of the life experiences shared in this synthesis can use my experiences as a pathway for themselves in their pursuits of making change.

In terms of Impostor Syndrome, it can't be stated enough that the majority of us have experienced its effects in our lives at some point. College students who had to deal with or who are currently dealing with Impostor Syndrome need as much support as possible from their peers, families, and institutions. I have presented several methods by which institutions can address impostor symptoms and enact practical strategies to combat it. Out of all the recommended methods of support that campuses can take advantage of the most crucial one is to continue to get information about Impostor syndrome out to all students. The transition from life at home to living on campus is a huge adjustment for all students and unfortunately a breeding ground for Impostor syndrome. The research I conducted on ITTO exposed that every student I interviewed had never heard of Impostor syndrome until right before they arrived on campus and after their first year on campus were never informed about it again. Impostor Syndrome is not consistent and comes in and out of students' lives and especially throughout their academic experience. Information needs to be updated and given out yearly to begin the process of normalizing Impostor Syndrome in hopes of instilling confidence in students if they feel they need to seek help. This concept of providing up-to-date information on Impostor Syndrome is the inspiration for creating digital resources for students. Though the digital resource I am envisioning will be

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more focused on the conceptualization of ITTO with additional information on Impostor Syndrome.

My research into ITTO has provided me with enough substance that I am willing to present this to other campuses and more specifically target their DEI departments. During the interview process, the responses to students' experiences with ITTO were in-depth and emotional. After each interview I found myself needing a moment to decompress because I could relate to their stories from my own experiences.

Though despite the information I compiled being enough substance for me I am aware that in the true sense of research, more investigation is required. I am hesitant to proclaim this as the sixth Imposter type because of two indisputable facts. First, Dr. Valerie Young created the concept of five impostor types after working with tens of thousands of people experiencing Impostor Syndrome. In comparison, I only conducted eight interviews. Secondly, The field of Impostor Syndrome is still currently evolving with researchers presenting proposals of their own depiction of a sixth impostor type. Respecting the work of other researchers it's more appropriate to present ITTO as an additional type of Impostor Syndrome and not the sixth.

Lastly, in terms of future research outside of continuing to gather information from a larger crowd, there are two avenues of research that could help further substantiate ITTO. ITTO focuses on a student who identifies as a combination of first-generation, low-income, and students of color who attend a private and wealthy PWI. If these students hypothetically attended a less-wealthy state institution would their experiences be the same? Additionally, another potential direction for research conducted into ITTO is to investigate if ITTO is exclusive to these populations of students or can this experience manifests in the lives of others.

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Regardless of which direction the research goes it would be presented on the accessible digital resource I am proposing. In addition to these findings, there will be all information that was provided in this synthesis. The resource would contain all background information on ITTO, general information about Impostor Syndrome, acknowledgment of Dr. Valerie Young and her conceptualization of five impostor types, information on how institutions can support Impostor Syndrome, A dedicated page on Restorative Practices, and lastly recorded interviews with students who are willing to share their experiences. It's through their voices that provide the true gravity of the situation. (Appendix C)

Overall, observing Impostor Syndrome through the lens of DEI is not a new concept because its origins begin with research investigating the effects of marginalization of high-achieving women in higher education. Based on my research on Impostor Syndrome I am given the impression if trends remain to be the same that feelings of impostorism may be an enviable experience for those who come from underrepresented backgrounds. If anyone has ever experienced hardships in their life related to their race, color, sex, class, sexual preferences, or disabilities it is imperative that information on Impostor Syndrome be readily available to these populations. ITTO serves as a field of investigation in an attempt to create more inclusive environments on college campuses. If there is any doubt in my conceptualization or flaws in my research please use this synthesis as inspiration to conduct additional research. My objective here is not to claim credit as the founder of the sixth type of Impostor Syndrome but to work toward a future where I never again have to look into the crying eyes of a student as they break down because they can't figure out where they end and the Impostor begins.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide: Processes of Research and Engagement

A. Before the interview (once the interview is scheduled, but before you get there):

1. Confirmed that it's a virtual meeting-for recording purposes
2. Send over background information on Impostor 2-2-1
3. Assess my goals-review interview questions
4. Review personal interview guidelines
 - Outside from designated points refrain from speaking about myself
 - Keep any additional or follow-up questions open ended
 - Not all silence is bad-allowing time for interviewee to think

B. During the interview:

[Preliminaries – clarification of expectations and agreements, getting settled...]

1. Greetings-Formal introduction
2. Ask if I can record the interview
3. Send release form (given campus policies this may be needed)

[Question List, in sequence]

A1. What is your field of study and why does it interest you so much?

- *Thank them for sharing with me*. Share my own connections to their career and express why I chose them for this interview.

B2. Have you ever heard about the term impostor syndrome before this interview? Do you believe you have ever been affected by it? what was going on during that time in your life ***If they feel comfortable sharing***

C3. After reading the brief background information on Impostor syndrome, In regards to the designated five competencies types which one do you identify with the most-Why?

D4. Based on the provided explanation of Impostor 2-2-1, what are your initial thoughts? What aspects of Impostor 2-2-1 resonate with you?

E5. Do you believe this is something that College Campuses should create resources for? Could you provide any insight on what that might look like?

F6 . This concept is still in its infancy, are there any additional thoughts on the subject or aspects of Impostor 2-2-1 that should take into consideration as research continues?

[Closing – confirmation of next steps or follow-up, etc.]

1. Respect the clock and end the meeting accordingly.
2. Thank them for their time
3. Inform them that a follow-up email will be sent
4. Lastly express that if they wish to share insight or if they thought of a question that they didn't think of before- I can be reached through email.

C. After the interview:

- A. Go over the transcription and highlight any theme or information that grabs my attention.
- B. Send a "Thank you" email the next day or latest by the end of the week.

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- C. Once research has concluded- reach back out again thanking the interviewee for everything and share a final reflection – be sure to leave the door open for future conversations

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APPENDIX B. RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CIRCLE TEMPLATE

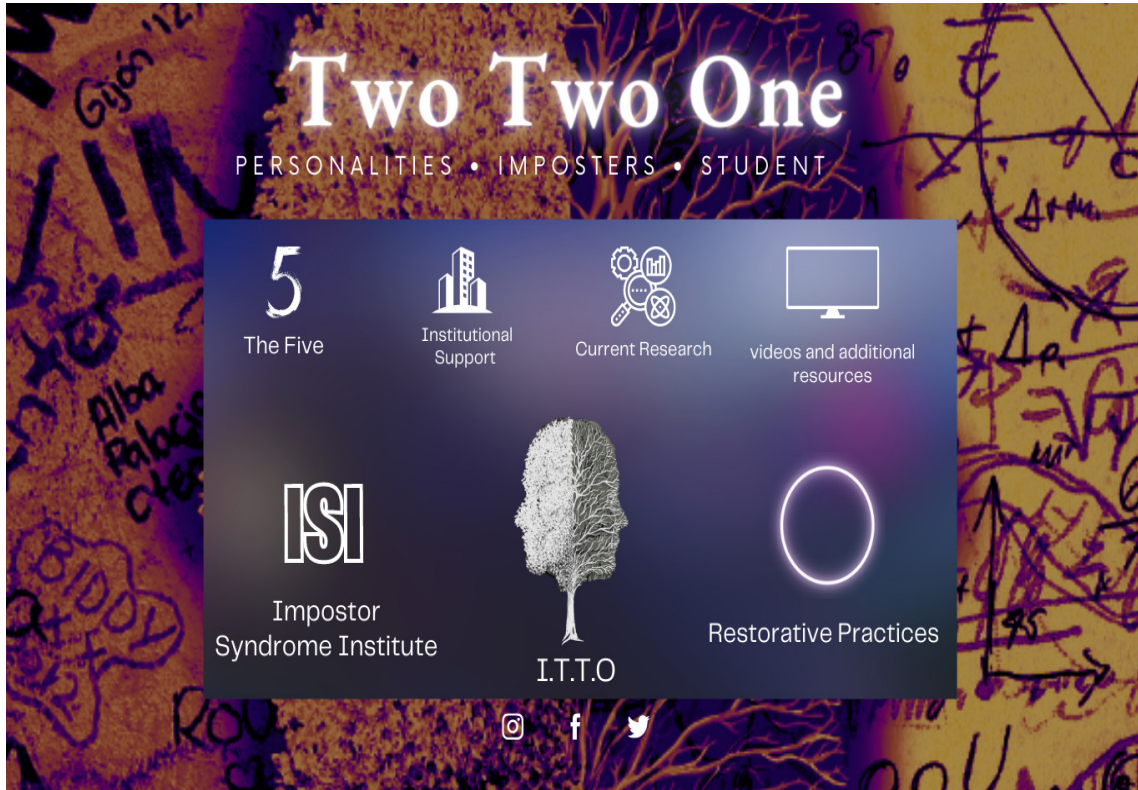
CIRCLE TITLE

*Circle facilitator check-in: How are you feeling 1-5? What are your personal goals for this circle?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Welcome & Intros ___ Minutes | Circle Opening & Introductions Read Quote: Share: Name, Pronoun, & Opening Prompt |
| Reason for Gathering ___ Minutes | Our reason for gathering in circle today is to... |
| Objectives ___ Minutes | ● ● ● ● |
| Land Acknowledgement ___ Minutes | <p>" In the spirit of uncovering the hidden truths of this land, its people, and their collective histories, we want to acknowledge that all of us are gathered today on ancestral grounds of indigenous peoples. We offer our respect to the elders past, present, and emerging of the indigenous groups who've acted as the original custodians of the connecticut river valley, including those from the Nonotuck, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag, Mohegan, Mohican, Pequot and Abenaki.</p> <p>And in this journey to share truth and seek reconciliation, we also make room for the histories of those who were brought here against their will or drawn here in hopes of building better lives, and whose stories are interwoven in the legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us all to this place and time. Giving voice to these truths is an essential part of creating mutually respectful relationships, and connections across all barriers of heritage and difference"</p> |
| Grounding Practice ___ Minutes | |
| Agreements ___ Minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Speak and Listen from the heart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Judgments of self and others are not needed ● Honor confidentiality ● Say just enough <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Know your line between uncomfortable & unsafe ● You are always free to pass |
| Check In Round ___ Minutes | (20 Seconds of Silence / ___ Minute Shares) ● |
| Circle Prompt #1 ___ Minutes | (20 Seconds of Silence / ___ Minute Shares) ● |
| Circle Prompt #2 ___ Minutes | (15 Seconds of Silence / ___ Minute Shares) ● |
| Circle Prompt #3 ___ Minutes | (15 Seconds of Silence / ___ Minute Shares) ● RESONANCE: What still needs to be said? |
| Closing Prompt ___ Minutes | ● |
| Closing | ● |

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APPENDIX C. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ITTO DIGITAL RESOURCES (HOME PAGE)



4. Stress Reduction

Many people will experience heightened levels of stress at certain points in their lives. With increasing responsibility, new living situations, constant change, and the overwhelming presence of digital and social media, feelings of instability can lead to stress, anxiety, and even panic.

Practicing mindfulness may help to anchor you in the present, where you can observe your thoughts and feelings without chasing them and without assigning judgment or attaching emotions to them. In this way, mindfulness is a tool that has been shown to reduce stress, manage symptoms of anxiety, and allow people to live in the present moment with more ease.

Researchers reviewed more than 200 studies of mindfulness among healthy people and found mindfulness-based therapy was especially effective for reducing stress, anxiety and depression. Mindfulness can also help treat people with specific problems including depression, pain, smoking and addiction.

- American Psychological Association. (2019, October 30). Mindfulness meditation: A research-proven way to reduce stress.

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5. The Breath

The Breath is everything. If we are not breathing, we are not living. When experiencing feelings of anxiety, it is common to find you are holding your breath or taking shallow breaths. The physical impacts of holding or restricting your breath can symptoms of anxiety and panic, whereas controlling your breath through various exercises can have a calming, anxiety-reducing effect.

Deep breathing increases the supply of oxygen to your brain and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of calmness. Breathing techniques help you feel connected to your body—it brings your awareness away from the worries in your head and quiets your mind.

- The American Institute of Stress. (2012, August 10). Take a Deep Breath.

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6. Stress Reduction Exercises

I invite you to try practice some of the breathing exercises in the following section. If you are able to, read the written instructions first, and then follow the steps as you color the illustrations. If you practice these breathing exercises regularly, you will have a resource to call upon whenever you are experiencing heightened levels of stress.

These methods are not quick fixes to mental health issues, but they can be effective tools to help manage and reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and panic.

Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.
Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again.
 -Thich Nhat Hanh
The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation



Mindfulness

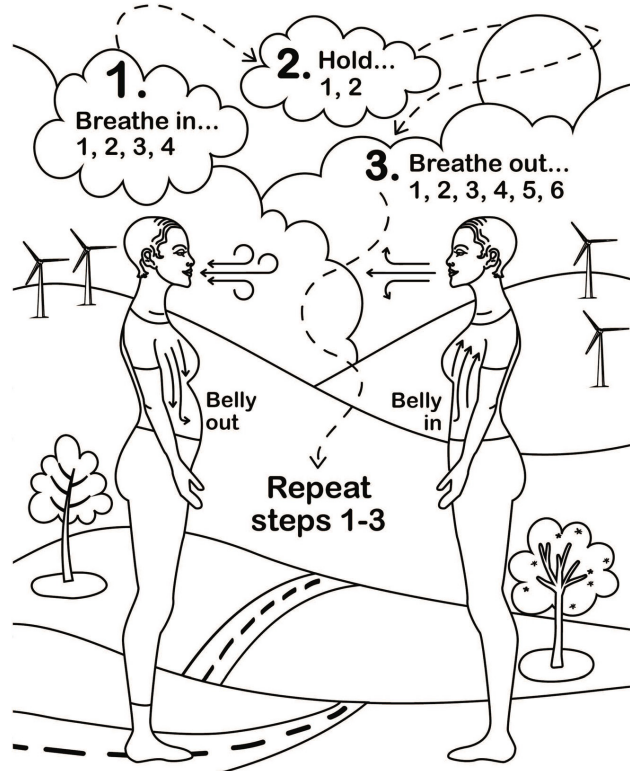
6. Stress Reduction Exercises

4-2-6 Breathing

4-2-6 breathing is something you can consider a "rescue" breathing method that can be in times of stress to quickly increase the supply of oxygen to the blood and bring about feelings of relaxation. This can also be practiced when you are more relaxed, so the exercise can be recalled at will.

1. Inhale deeply and slowly count to 4, expanding your belly as you do so
2. Hold that breath for a count of 2
3. Slowly exhale though your mouth for a count of 6

Repeat steps 1-3 for 3 to 5 minutes.



6. Stress Reduction Exercises

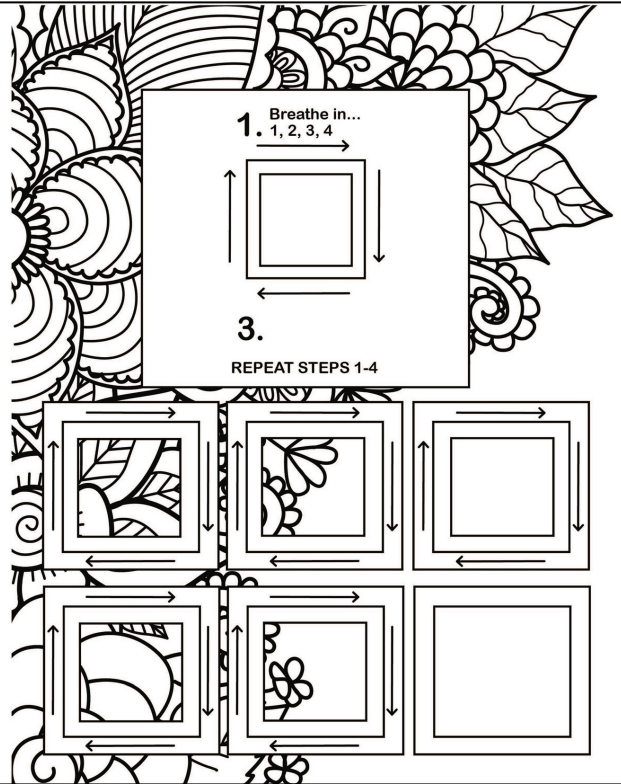
Box Breathing

Box breathing is sometimes also referred to as square breathing. It is an exercise that can help you slow down and gain control of your breathing. It works by distracting your mind as you count to four, calming your nervous system, and decreasing stress in your body.

1. Inhale steadily to a count of 4
2. Hold that breath for a count of 4
3. Exhale steadily to a count of 4
4. Hold that breath for a count of 4

Repeat steps 1-4 for 3-5 minutes.

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6. Stress Reduction Exercises

Mindful Breathing

Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on your breathing and bringing your attention to the present without allowing your mind to drift to the past or future. Engaging in mindfulness breathing exercises serves the same purpose, which can help ease your anxiety.

One mindfulness breathing exercise to try involves choosing a calming focus, including a sound (“om”), positive word (“peace”), or phrase (“breathe in calm, breathe out tension”) to repeat silently as you inhale or exhale.

Let go and relax. If you notice that your mind has drifted, take a deep breath and gently return your attention to the present.

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TWO IDENTITIES TWO IMPOSTORS ONE STUDENT

7. A New Way of Thinking

The introduction to mindfulness and sample exercises in this coloring book prototype offer a sampling of what is contained in formal Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program.

I hope this book has planted a seed that practicing mindfulness can lead to a new way of thinking that puts the power of managing symptoms of stress, anxiety, and panic into your own capacity. Please find resources on the following page to help you continue to explore mindfulness.

Please send feedback on your experience with this coloring book to the following email address:
billiecharles@gmail.com

"Mindfulness increases the awareness of the Nature of the Mind. If we learn to Control our Mind and Listen to our Souls we can consciously choose to be Joyful instead of sad, Peaceful and Loving, Alert and Relaxed.
- Natasa Pantovic Nuit, *Mindful Being*

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8. Free Online Resources

American Mindfulness Research Association

The American Mindfulness Research Association was founded in 2013 and is a website that brings together the latest research in Mindfulness.
<https://goamra.org>

East Coast Mindfulness

Online mindfulness programs for living authentic, healthy, happy lives.
<https://www.eastcoastmindfulness.com/>

Free Mindfulness:

A website which gathers resources from a community of mindfulness practitioners. There is a 'free resources' section with mindfulness practices to download.
<http://www.freemindfulness.org>

Greater Good Magazine Science-Based Insights for Meaningful Life

Greater Good magazine turns scientific research into stories, tips, and tools for a happier life and a more compassionate society. Within their library, there is a wealth of information and articles on the topic of mindfulness.
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/>

Mindful Communications

Mindful Communications is dedicated to sharing the gifts of mindfulness through content, training, courses, and directories—helping people enjoy better health, foster more caring relationships, and cultivate a more compassionate society.
<https://www.mindful.org/>

Pocket Mindfulness

Pocket Mindfulness is a website to help others learn about, understand and apply mindfulness in everyday life.
<http://www.pocketmindfulness.com>

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC)

The mission of the Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC) is to foster mindful awareness across the lifespan through education and research to promote well-being and a more compassionate society.
<https://www.uclahealth.org/programs/marc>

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