Impostor Phenomenon and Burnout: An Online Descriptive Survey of U.S. Student Affairs Professionals

Maria Patestas
Dr.MariaPatestas@gmail.com

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Impostor Phenomenon and Burnout: An Online Descriptive Survey of U.S. Student Affairs Professionals

Abstract
Student affairs professionals are often susceptible to burnout due to the nature of their job, the addition of other responsibilities and campus challenges, and the combating of emotionally stressful situations every day. Burnout has been shown to limit the performance of student affairs professionals, foster a hostile work environment, and lead to attrition. One promising yet understudied predictive factor for burnout has been the role of impostorism. While a few studies have examined this phenomenon in some helping professions, e.g., faculty and medical professionals, no studies have examined the impostorism-burnout link in student affairs professionals. The present study partially replicated the impostorism-burnout studies conducted with medical professionals. Student affairs professionals, like medical professionals, may experience similar compassion fatigue due to the nature of their work and the demands of the work environment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure the prevalence of impostorism and burnout, the interrelationships between impostorism and burnout and any demographic differences among U.S. student affairs professionals. After utilizing both convenience and snowball sampling, 742 respondents completed an online Qualtrics survey (i.e., demographic questionnaire, the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and a single-item burnout measure). Results revealed that both impostorism and burnout were prevalent among student affairs professionals. As expected, respondents reported frequent feelings of impostorism and moderate burnout. Impostorism was found to be a small, yet significant predictor of burnout scores. No significant demographic differences were revealed. Implications for practice, training, and research were discussed.

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Impostor Phenomenon and Burnout:
An Online Descriptive Survey of U.S. Student Affairs Professionals

By

Maria Patestas

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Byron K. Hargrove, Ph.D.

Committee Member
Judy Wolfe, Ed.D.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

May 2020
Dedication

This dissertation journey has been quite a memorable and interesting one filled with obstacles and detours along the way. I’d like to start off by acknowledging myself. Self- don’t ever forget the work you put in to get to this moment. Let this dissertation serve as a reminder of how capable you are and how you can do anything you put your mind to as long as you want it bad enough. You chose this topic because you’ve often seen yourself as an impostor and the research definitely put things into perspective. Many doubted you along the way- and in some moments even you doubted you. Alas, with Parkinson’s Law in full effect, you saw it through to the end- you even defended during a pandemic! You persisted, you achieved; you did this for you. What’s next?

My deepest thanks to my committee. This marathon quickly turned to a sprint and I couldn’t have asked for a better pit crew for these last laps around the track. Dr. Wolfe, we started on this journey as cohort-mates and I am grateful to you for taking the time to help see me through all these years later as a committee member. I appreciate every text, FaceTime, meet-up; just every minute of your time and every bit of knowledge and every ounce of encouragement. Thanks for believing in me. To my Chair Dr. Hargrove, I would have never made it to the finish line without your help, insight, sayings, knowledge and support. You uplifted me when I was down, redirected me when I went astray and consistently kept me motivated with every phone call. You truly are “the finisher” and most certainly a miracle worker. I hope you feel as accomplished to be my chair in this journey as I am to have completed it.
Thanks to my parents for teaching me the value of hard work, for the sacrifices they made to help me achieve my academic goals, and for understanding (after all these years) that learning happens differently for everyone. Katie, you’re the best. Your honesty, love, support and every “you’re doing great!” helped to see me through; I am so lucky to have you as a sister. Our relationship is a vital part of my life and I appreciate you so much. To my favorite tiny human, Olivia, you amaze me every day and I cannot wait to see who you grow up to become. Just know Auntie will do her best to keep you from feeling like an impostor.

TSY I look up to you more than you could imagine. Thank you for seeing my potential and consistently pushing me out of my comfort zone. Your unwavering guidance has never steered me wrong. I am so grateful to have you in my life. You motivate me to be better every day and I hope I make you proud as a mentee, colleague, and friend. Now, on to the next challenge!

Alex- there are no words to explain how integral you were in this process. You hyped me up (but not too much lol) at every stage of this project. Thanks for being my sounding board, for stopping me from getting in my own way, for getting me into EDM, but, mostly for relentlessly keeping me focused on the MVP. Morg, thanks for being my process partner; our morning chats kept me sane throughout this journey. V, you’ve done more for me than you will ever know- you’re my person. I hope this inspires you and motivates you to finish something you’ve been working on for yourself as well. Proud of you already-you got this!
Biographical Sketch

Maria Patestas is currently the Director of Student Life at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York. Ms. Patestas attended Stony Brook University and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology in 2006 and a Master of Professional Studies degree in Human Resource Management in 2008. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2013 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Patestas pursued her research in impostor phenomenon and burnout in student affairs professionals under the direction of Dr. Byron K. Hargrove and Dr. Judy Wolfe and received the Ed.D. degree in 2020.
Abstract

Student affairs professionals are often susceptible to burnout due to the nature of their job, the addition of other responsibilities and campus challenges, and the combating of emotionally stressful situations every day. Burnout has been shown to limit the performance of student affairs professionals, foster a hostile work environment, and lead to attrition. One promising yet understudied predictive factor for burnout has been the role of impostorism. While a few studies have examined this phenomenon in some helping professions, e.g., faculty and medical professionals, no studies have examined the impostorism-burnout link in student affairs professionals. The present study partially replicated the impostorism-burnout studies conducted with medical professionals. Student affairs professionals, like medical professionals, may experience similar compassion fatigue due to the nature of their work and the demands of the work environment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure the prevalence of impostorism and burnout, the interrelationships between impostorism and burnout and any demographic differences among U.S. student affairs professionals. After utilizing both convenience and snowball sampling, 742 respondents completed an online Qualtrics survey (i.e., demographic questionnaire, the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and a single-item burnout measure). Results revealed that both impostorism and burnout were prevalent among student affairs professionals. As expected, respondents reported frequent feelings of impostorism and moderate burnout. Impostorism was found to be a small, yet significant predictor of burnout scores. No significant demographic
differences were revealed. Implications for practice, training, and research were discussed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Student affairs professionals (SAPs) in U.S. colleges and universities are mainly responsible for the well-being and conduct of students as well as the promotion of student learning and development outside the classroom (Coomes & Gerda, 2016; Hevel, 2016; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). According to Hevel (2016), the very first positions in student affairs emerged as of the late 1890s at institutions like Harvard, the University of Chicago, and other schools that were newly admitting women. These positions were created for several reasons including: (a) faculty members and college presidents were less interested in monitoring students, particularly at a time where coeducation was spreading; (b) there was an increase in public concern over appropriate supervision of coeds on campus; and (c) the male administrators weren’t familiar and didn’t want to deal with the issues that came with female college students.

The 1920s brought about the student personnel movement which significantly influenced the work of early student affairs administrators and created new positions at many institutions (Hevel, 2016). During that time, the original dean of women and dean of men positions were merged to create a new dean of students position. Colleges also had to prepare for the influx of student veterans who would attend following World War II; Indiana University was one of the first to merge the offices in preparation (Hevel, 2016). The movement expanded at colleges across the US through the 1920s and 1930s. “Responsibilities of early deans materialized in several ways: by acquiring supervision of
existing functions on campus (e.g., student publications), by creating new services (e.g.,
orientation programs), and by being delegated time-consuming and largely undesirable
tasks (e.g., campus discipline)” (Hevel, 2016, p. 850). As an example, the dean of men at
Purdue University first confessed, “I discovered that every unpleasant task that the
president or the faculty did not want to do was my task. I was convinced that the Dean of
Men’s office was intended as the dumping ground of all unpleasant things” (Schwartz,
2010, p. 4). During this time, the role of these student personnel administrators was not
clearly defined or uniformed across campuses. This new role ambiguity led to a 2-day
conference sponsored by the American Council on Education focused on the “problems
related to the clarification of the field of student personnel work” (Willisamson et al.,
1949). The feeling of role ambiguity in SAPs has existed since then, and has only
intensified to the present, as the profession has continued to expand to meet the growing
diversity of student needs at a variety of colleges and universities.

The profile of higher educational institutions and their students has changed
significantly since the 1870s and the role of the SAP has also evolved and expanded over
the last century (Coomes & Gerda, 2016; Snyder, 1993) Modern student affairs
professionals represent a diversity of job titles, offices, and departments that expand well
beyond just the original dean of students position. Today, a plethora of departments at
U.S. colleges and universities now fall under student affairs including:

Residence life, commuter services, graduate student services, admissions, new
student orientation, financial aid, counseling centers, advising centers, leadership
development, Greek affairs, student activities, student unions, leadership
development, community service, service-learning, career planning and
placement, discipline and judicial affairs, alumni relations and development, 
services for students with disabilities, developmental learning services, and 
advocacy and support programs (e.g., for students of color, lesbian, bisexual, gay, 
and transgender students, veterans, women, international students, adults). (Love, 
2003, para. 9)

The expansion of these job titles within student affairs has coincided with the 
increase in student enrollment at many colleges and universities over the last century. 
Terenzini and Pascarella (1998) noted that many students no longer fit the traditional 
student profile of White, ages 18–22, attending a 4-year institution full-time, living on 
campus, do not work, and have few, if any, family responsibilities. As such, many higher 
education institutions are enrolling more college students who are people of color, 
working students, adult learners, online learners, veterans, international students, and 
students with disabilities and mental health issues (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1998). 
Students reflect the tremendous diversity of the nation and are now bringing to the 
campus such high expectations and needs for academic and personal support services that 
many institutions are struggling to find adequate resources to meet what students expect, 
or want and need. This has placed considerable strain on student affairs divisions. 
(Sandeen & Barr, 2006, p. 39). These consistent changes and increased expectations 
continue to stress the importance of having qualified student affairs professionals. 

As student diversity and needs have evolved, the job duties and level of 
responsibility for SAPs has also increased (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & 
Kicklighter, 1998). Like in the past, modern SAPs also find themselves in a position with 
a more flexible job description (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). The expectation for SAPs is to
do what they were hired for, but to also be counted on to take on new challenges (e.g., providing continuity of service despite budget or staffing cuts, or handling student engagement during a pandemic, and developing a virtual student community in 2 weeks), and working on emerging initiatives (e.g., being asked to serve on college-wide committees) that do not necessarily fit in any other department at the institution (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). In student affairs, these other duties as assigned are generally responsibilities that do not always fall within an individual’s official job description for which they were hired, but are assigned to them because of employee skill or convenience to the supervisor or institution (Wilbanks, 2011).

Tull (2006) pointed out that for many SAPs, managing the evolving day-to-day duties and other assigned duties can lead to perceived opportunities for advancement as well as role ambiguity, overload, conflict, and burnout. Wolverton, Wolverton and Gmelch (1999) described overload as having more responsibilities to complete in the allotted work hours. Role ambiguity is a lack of information required to complete tasks or having unclear performance expectations and role conflict as opposing expectations of administration and students; SAPs must find a delicate balance between advocating for the student while also implementing institutional policies. (Wolverton et al., 1999). In addition to role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict, college administrators (including SAPs) are often at a high risk of burnout as result of taking on too many responsibilities for a prolonged period (Cloud, 1991).

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), “burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that frequently occurs among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (p. 99). Burnout has potentially serious consequences for individuals. It
can affect the quality of service or care provided by individuals; it can lead to absenteeism, low morale and high job turnover, increased use of drugs and alcohol, insomnia, physical exhaustion, and family or marital problems (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Initial research about burnout identified workload and ambiguity as major stressors and antecedents to burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Within higher education, burnout appears to be a very real concern. “Burned-out administrators often demonstrate such symptoms as lack of enthusiasm for the job, loss of interest, loss of tolerance for others, a feeling of isolation, loss of creative drive, a feeling of being stuck, and laziness” (Cloud, 1991, p. 33). Burnout is not only detrimental to the individual, it also affects everyone around the person; this includes student, faculty, and staff who have to work with the SAP, and not just family and friends (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, & Lowery, 2016; Mullen, Malone, Denney, & Dietz, 2018). Numerous student affairs organizations like the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) routinely discuss best practices for managing burnout for their members in workshops, conferences, trainings, articles, and publications. Thus, more research is needed to highlight factors and antecedents that might predict burnout among student affairs professionals.

**Statement of the Problem**

Given that SAPs have to manage additional responsibilities, challenges, and many emotionally distressful situations every day (Sandeen & Barr, 2006), a number of recent empirical studies have focused on the correlates and effects of burnout among student affairs professionals. Burnout can hinder the performance of student affairs
professionals, foster a hostile work environment, and lead to attrition (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Marshall et al., 2016; Mullen et al., 2018). Burnout has also been associated with poor self-care, attrition, declining customer service, irritability, and depression (Marshall et al., 2016). Despite some advancement on burnout among SAPs, a number of questions continue to be unanswered in the literature. How much burnout do student affairs professionals experience and self-report? Which professionals are most vulnerable to burnout? Some studies suggest the following factors can lead to burnout: increased student enrollment, additional responsibilities, extreme hours, extended periods of stressful circumstances, poor supervision, job satisfaction, and misfit in motivation styles and incentives, to name a few (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Marshall et al., 2016; Mullen et al., 2018).

One psychological factor that has garnered some significant research attention in higher education and other industries over the last decade has been the concept of impostorism (Hutchins, 2015; Parkman, 2016; Vaughn, Taasoobshirazi, & Johnson, 2019). What is the impostor phenomenon? Who are impostors? Impostors doubt their capacity regardless of external standards showing them otherwise. In addition, impostors tend to seek perfection from themselves and strive to minimize mistakes and failures by working harder and longer hours (Clance, 1985; Parkman, 2016). As a result of maintaining these distressing thoughts and feelings, stress and anxiety in an individual can increase and can lead to burnout (Churchill, 2019). All of these factors negatively impact how SAPs can service their respective students.

While there have been studies to examine the effects of impostorism on other topics such as parenting styles (Li, Hughes, & Thu, 2014), perfectionism (Dudau, 2014),
self-esteem (Garwick, Ford, & Hughes, 2011), impact on specific groups of people (Cokley, McClain, Encisco, & Martinez, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2019), and narcissists (Kaufman, Weiss, Miller, & Campbell, 2018), the researcher found few studies on impostor phenomenon and higher education (Hutchins, 2015; Vaughn et al., 2019) and none to date focusing specifically on student affairs professionals. Hoang (2013) wrote about implications in student affairs regarding impostorism, but focused mostly on students who may have feelings of impostorism because they are “exposed to new environments or stressful and unfamiliar situations in which they feel less secure about their ability to succeed” (p. 46). The researcher has no knowledge of any published studies or analyses to date on student affairs professionals’ self-reported experiences of the impostor phenomenon.

The predictive relationship between impostorism and burnout was recently examined in higher education and medicine. Hutchins (2015) examined the link between impostorism and emotional exhaustion among higher education faculty (Hutchins, 2015) and found a "strong positive and significant relationship among impostor thoughts and emotional exhaustion” (p. 6) in the faculty. Another recent empirical study found some evidence supporting the link between impostorism and burnout in another human services position – medical professionals (Leach, Nygaard, Chipman, Brunsvold, & Marek, 2019). Trainees and residents scored significantly higher on impostorism than faculty. While no significant differences were found in burnout between trainees and faculty, residents reported burnout significantly more than both trainees and faculty (Leach et al., 2019). Medical professionals may experience similar compassion fatigue as student affairs professionals, due to the nature of their work and the demands of the work environment.
Thus, might there be similar impostorism-burnout link among student affairs professionals? To date, there is no empirical evidence investigating impostor phenomenon and burnout in student affairs professionals. Despite a few empirical studies in this area (Hutchins, 2015) and higher education in general (Vaughn et al., 2019), there continues to be a number of research gaps in the literature.

According to Creswell (2012), there are five factors that determine if a new study needs to be conducted: (a) a study fills the void or extends existing research, (b) a study replicates a study with new participants or at new sites, (c) a new study has not been studied or is understudied, (d) a new study gives voice to people not heard in society, or (e) a new study informs practice. The present study fills the gap in the literature by studying the potential link between impostorism and burnout in student affairs professionals which has not been examined in this population and will inform best practices on working in student affairs and the development of the professional. The present study replicated impostorism-burnout studies conducted on medical professionals (Leach et al., 2019; Legassie, Zibrowski, & Goldszmidt, 2008; Villwock, Sobin, Koester, & Harris, 2016). Given that student affairs professionals are also in human services, similar to medical professionals, the present study attempted to describe the self-reports of student affairs professionals with regard to impostorism and burnout as examined in the medical field.

**Theoretical Rationale**

Both burnout and impostor phenomenon are complex and potentially similar psychological processes. The most widely understood theory about burnout comes from Maslach’s multidimensional theory of burnout. Burnout is defined as the “prolonged
response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach, 1998, p. 68). Three dimensions of burnout include “overwhelming exhaustion; feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job; and a sense of ineffectiveness and failure” (Maslach, 1998, p. 68). While the existence of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy may exist in varying degrees, their mere presence in an individual is evidence of burnout. The experience of burnout can impair an individual’s social, personal, and professional functioning and can be costly for the individual as well as their employer as a result of the decline in physical and psychological health and quality of work (Maslach, 1998). The three dimensions of burnout also present themselves in symptoms of impostor phenomenon. Exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of personal achievement are mimicked in feelings of impostorism as pressure to succeed, self-doubt, and inadequacy,

Maslach (1998) stated that in people-oriented professions such as education, health services, and healthcare, where interactions consist of ongoing, intense, personal, and emotional contact, burnout is seen as an occupational hazard. Social norms of these fields include being selfless; putting the needs of patients, clients, or students first; and giving one’s all. “When student affairs administrators help a student deal with emotional distress, they mimic the relationship that a caregiver has with a client, similar to a nurse or social worker” (Raimondi, 2019, p. 54). Raimondi (2019) explained that frequent interactions with students who are experiencing any kind of emotional distress can lead to compassion fatigue, which has the same characteristics as burnout. Student affairs professionals are not properly trained in graduate programs to handle the effects of empathetic relationships and emotional pain that may come about when working with students (Raimondi, 2019). Those who enter the field understand the expectations, but it
does not make them any less stressful. While the human services work can be engaging and rewarding, it can also be quite stressful (Maslach, 1998).

Feelings of burnout are multidimensional. “According to this theory, burnout is an individual stress experience embedded in a context of complex social relationships, and it involves the conception of both self and others” (Maslach, 1998, p. 69). Researchers have explored correlations and causalities of burnout and while “there has been a long-standing interest in identifying some key individual predictors of burnout, so far no major ones have emerged” (Maslach, 1998, p. 80). Maslach (1998) recognized that just because a relationship between two factors is plausible, it does not necessarily indicate that it is the correct one. For example, does burnout lead to poor mental health or does having a history of mental health issues decrease an individual’s ability to cope therefore causing burnout? This study sought to find if there is any relationship between burnout and impostor phenomenon. Antecedents of burnout focus on the relationship one has with their work (Toppinen-Tanner, 2011) and can mimic the feelings of impostorism which have to do with one’s relationship with the work they produce.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine (a) the prevalence of burnout and impostorism and (b) identify predictive relationships between feelings of burnout (outcome) and the degree of impostorism (predictor) in student affairs professionals across the United States. In addition, this study also explored any demographic differences (e.g., age, race, gender, level of education, years of experience, type of institution at which they work, job rank, or years of service. In an effort to collect as many participants from across the United States in a short amount of time and to maintain
a sense of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality, the study utilized a quantitative online survey methodology. Online surveys are low cost, there is access to the results in real-time; there is generally an increased response rate, and there is no potential influence from a researcher being present while conducting the survey (Creswell, 2014; Fielding, Lee, & Blank, 2008). Three research questions guided this study.

**Research Questions**

1. How prevalent is impostorism and burnout among U.S. student affairs professionals?

2. What is the predictive relationship between impostorism (predictor) and burnout (outcome) among U.S. student affairs professionals across the United States?

3. Are there any demographic differences among U.S. student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout?

**Significance of the Study**

Articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* often address how to prevent or overcome burnout with strategies that include maintaining a work-life balance, setting boundaries, engaging in daily reflection, and accentuating the positive (Carlson, 2019; Gooblar, 2018; Kafka, 2019; McClellan, 2012). In addition, the NASPA, one of the premiere national student affairs organizations, often conducts studies and offers annual workshops regarding burnout prevention and recovery, as well as self-care for student affairs professionals. If the burnout-impostorism link exists, then more workshops may need to focus on preventing or lowering impostorism among the ranks of student affairs professionals.
Why are feelings of impostorism of interest to researchers and psychotherapists if they do not actually prevent success? Self-proclaimed impostors may not be achieving to the best of their abilities and are not enjoying their successes. “Impostor phenomenon sufferers do not have a realistic sense of their own competence and are not fully empowered to internalize their strengths, accept their deficits, and function with joy” (Clance & O'Toole, 1988, p. 52). If feelings of impostorism are intense, sufferers may reject opportunities for advancement. They will not pursue their dreams and may instead settle for certainties. Feelings of self-doubt, guilt, anxiety, and fear of failure undermine their ability to excel at their highest potential. For them, there is no sense of reward that usually comes with success (Clance & O'Toole, 1988).

In addition to feelings of impostorism potentially holding SAPs back from their greatest achievements, the stress of dealing with impostorism can intensify feelings of burnout felt by simply working in the field of student affairs. Combined, feelings of impostorism and burnout can lead to attrition which is costly for both the individual and the institution. The researcher hopes the study results will provide insight to student affairs leaders as they design strategies for staff retention and support.

**Definition of Terms**

*Burnout* – Feelings of stress as a result of continuous interpersonal stressors at work.

*Compassion fatigue* – Personal exhaustion felt by those frequently and repeatedly showing empathy towards others who are suffering to some degree.

*Depersonalization* – One of the three dimensions of burnout, referring to cynicism, negativity or detachment to other people.
Emotional Exhaustion – One of the three dimensions of burnout, referring to a feeling of being depleted of one’s emotional resources and of being emotionally overextended.

Impostor Phenomenon – A perceived feeling of intellectual fraudulence.

Reduced Personal Accomplishment – One of the three dimensions of burnout, referring to a decrease in feelings of productivity, efficiency, and competence at work.

Student Affairs Professional – Student affairs professionals work in higher education departments that operate outside the classroom as student support services.

Chapter Summary

No research to date is available on the relationship between burnout and impostorism specifically in student affairs professionals. As burnout and impostorism negatively affect individuals, it is critical to gain an understanding to better prepare and care for student affairs professionals. The role of the student affairs professional is critical to the success of students enrolled in college. This study sought to find the relationship between burnout and impostorism to assist with the future of student affairs.

Chapter 2 outlines research found in the literature. Chapter 3 provides details of the research study methodology. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the research. Chapter 5 provides implications of the study, limitations of the study, recommendations for the future, and an overall conclusion.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Stress and burnout continue to be challenges facing many student affairs professionals. In order to better understand this population, burnout, and factors that lead to burnout, this chapter will provide a critical review of the pertinent background literature and showcase the profession of college student affairs in higher education. The chapter is organized into three sections – an introduction and purpose, a review of the literature, and a chapter summary.

Introduction

Lorden (1998) concluded that burnout, resulting from “the long hours and stressful conditions commonly associated with student affairs work” (p. 209), is one of the primary causes of attrition for student affairs professionals. Burnout can hinder the performance of student affairs professionals, foster a hostile work environment, and lead to attrition (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Marshall et al., 2016; Mullen et al., 2018). Burnout has also been associated with poor self-care, attrition, declining customer service, irritability, and depression (Marshall et al., 2016). The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators annually conducts national research and workshops regarding burnout prevention and recovery, as well as best practices for self-care for student affairs professionals. Nonetheless, more research is needed to better understand how to predict burnout in student affairs professionals.

One promising predictive factor of burnout is the role of impostorism in helping professionals. While recent burnout-impostorism studies have examined this relationship
among medical professionals, no previous burnout-impostorism studies have examined student affairs professionals specifically. As helping professionals dealing with front-line issues with diverse students, student affairs professionals often run the risk of work overload, compassion fatigue, and burnout, as they address many emotionally distressful situations every day (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). While there has been some work on impostorism in higher education (Hutchins, 2015; Vaughn et al., 2019), no studies have focused specifically on the impostorism-burnout relationship. Therefore, the purpose of this study was threefold: to examine the degree to which U.S. student affairs professionals self-report both impostorism and burnout (Hypothesis 1), determine the predictive relationships between impostorism and burnout (Hypothesis 2) and identify any demographic differences (Hypothesis 3) among U.S. student affairs professionals.

Review of the Literature

Student affairs. Student affairs professionals work in higher education departments at 2-year to 4-year institutions and typically operate outside the classroom in the form of student support services. Student affairs professionals are tasked with the holistic growth of the student, beyond the educational classroom experience (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). At its core, the goal of student affairs is to help every college student get the most out of their college experience (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). Short-term goals and strategies typically focus on ensuring students strive during their college years and graduate, while long-term goals serve as catalysts for curiosity and growth (Coomes & Gerda, 2016). Student affairs professionals execute these goals in a variety of titles and departments including:
Residence life, commuter services, graduate student services, admissions, new student orientation, financial aid, counseling centers, advising centers, leadership development, Greek affairs, student activities, student unions, leadership development, community service, service learning, career planning and placement, discipline and judicial affairs, alumni relations and development, services for students with disabilities, developmental learning services, and advocacy and support programs (e.g., for students of color, lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender students, veterans, women, international students, adults). (Love, 2003, para. 9)

Often used interchangeably, the terms stress and burnout are similar but not interchangeable. (Farber, 1983). Burnout manifests as the result of continuous stress and is felt by individuals when they believe they can no longer adapt to stressors in their life (Shaw, Bensky, & Dixon, 1981). Freudenberger (1974) explained symptoms of burnout manifest themselves differently in each individual and can vary in type and degree.

Burnout in student affairs is often looked at when examining attrition in the field (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Lorden, 1998; Marshall et al., 2016). In addition, “the field of student affairs administration tends to place extremely high and sometimes unrealistic demands on the time and energy of its constituents” (Marshall et al., 2016, p. 157).

**Burnout in student affairs professionals.** Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) examined the differences in burnout and other factors between men and women in student affairs. Their quantitative survey study yielded 344 (159 male and 185 female) employed full-time student affairs professionals who completed a paper-and-pencil
version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory and a measure of demographic and job-related characteristics. The results from the Emotional Exhaustion (EE) portion of the MBI were used to determine a mean of 3.66 and 3.40 for women and men respectively, out of 7, indicating a moderate level of EE. Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) conducted two-way analyses of variance to examine interaction effects of demographic and job-related characteristics on burnout as they differ in men and women. Significant differences were found in institutional affiliation (private school, $M = 3.70$ and public school, $M = 3.44$). They also concluded that the women student affairs professionals exhibited higher emotional exhaustion relative to the men due to several reasons including women with children, lower salary, more areas of responsibility, and a small number of staff members available to them.

Tull (2006) conducted an online survey to “examine the relationship between perceived level of synergistic supervision received, job satisfaction, and intention to turnover among new student affairs professionals” (p. 477). Tull (2006) identified job dissatisfaction as “role ambiguity, role conflict, role orientation, role stress, job burnout, work overload, and perceived opportunities for goal attainment, professional development, and career advancement” (p. 465). Thus, burnout is often considered part of job dissatisfaction and one of the main reasons SAPs leave the field. A significant positive correlation was found between perceived level of synergistic supervision and job satisfaction (Tull, 2006).

Members of National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and American College Personnel Association were asked to share Tull’s (2006) online survey of quantitative and qualitative questions to colleagues they knew who had left the field.
The current study did not ask any qualitative questions, but also used ACPA membership to recruit participants. Seven themes emerged from Marshall et al. (2016) mixed methods study on why student affairs professionals left their roles including: burnout, salary issues, career alternatives, work/family conflict, limited advancement, supervisor issues and institutional fit (p. 146). Burnout was found to be the number one factor for leaving student affairs. “Participants reported extreme work obligations, which led to burnout, fatigue, and eventual departure” (Marshall et al., 2016, p. 152). It was noted that as financial resources continue to decrease on college campuses, it is important to evaluate the attrition rates to determine what changes in the field can be made to keep SAPs from leaving. Employee turnover is costly and is an issue for institutions of higher education struggling financially (Marshall et al., 2016). High levels of attrition can cost the organization significant time and money and often impact institutional and departmental productivity due to challenges such as the time it takes to train new professionals who fill the holes in personnel as a result of attrition, or the additional tasks that must be taken on by other employees after the loss of a co-worker (Marshall et al., 2016, p. 146).

Burnout continues to drive higher attrition rates and more responsibilities among student affairs professionals at many institutions. Employees leaving due to burnout can cause undue stress on their coworkers who now have to take on the additional tasks, which can result in them also wanting to leave because of burnout. Furthermore, responsibilities for SAPs increase as attendance at institutions of higher education also increase (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). There are certainly changes that can be made to ensure qualified individuals will be attracted to and remain in the field (Lorden, 1998).
Functions of SAPs are “critical to the success of their colleges and universities [and] it is essential that work factors related to burnout be identified and addressed in order to maximize the recruitment, retention, and successful performance of [SAPs]” (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998, p. 82). Mullen et al. (2018) built on the study conducted by Marshall et al. (2016) by exploring job stress and burnout in relation to job satisfaction and turnover intention in student affairs professionals using an online survey. SAPs from the study were found to exhibit low to moderate levels of burnout, however, it was important to note that 21% of participants reported moderate to high levels of burnout. Based on this survey, it is clear why more research needed to be conducted on burnout within the field of student affair professionals.

In conclusion, these studies suggested that burnout is a very important part of job dissatisfaction, is the top reason as to why student affairs professionals leave, is especially problematic for women, and is often a driver of high attrition rates. Therefore, this current study sought to discover the work factors related to burnout among student affairs professionals. What psychological factors might help predict burnout? The current study built on these burnout studies using a larger, national sample and included the impostor phenomenon or impostorism as a potential predictor.

**What is the impostor phenomenon?** The term *impostor phenomenon* (IP) was first coined by clinical psychologists Clance and Imes (1978). Their initial research focused on high achieving women who were respected in their fields, had earned a Ph.D. or were high achieving female students recognized for their academic excellence. These women felt they have fooled everyone and that their accomplishments, acceptance to their programs, achievements, etc. could be attributed to an overestimation of their
abilities, a clerical error, misgrading, or even luck and not their abilities. These high achieving women found numerous excuses to negate any evidence that contradicted their belief that they were actually unintelligent.

Clance and Imes (1978) found high achieving women to create self-imposed stereotypes such as incompetence as a result of internalizing societal sex-role stereotypes. In comparison to men, who own their success and attribute it to their inherent abilities, women accredit it to an internal quality such as effort or to an external cause such as luck. While one would predict repeated success would change one’s opinions of their aptitude, women with IP continue to discount their abilities and perpetuate a feeling of fear of failure; success alone was not sufficient to break the cycle.

Women with IP were observed to typically fall into one of two groups in terms of childhood upbringing. They were either the child who was consistently compared to a smarter sibling or family member or they were considered by their family as perfect and the child who could do no wrong. In the former situation, this child finds it impossible to prove to her family that she is bright regardless of her intellectual accomplishments. While she hopes her family sees her grades, academic honors or acclaim from teachers, and acknowledges she is more than sensitive or charming, they continue to be unimpressed, still claiming the other family member to be brighter while often lacking in comparison. As this young woman continues to seek validation of her intellectual intelligence, she also begins to doubt herself, thinking her family may be correct; she wants to believe her family, but also disprove them (Clance & Imes, 1978).

The other family dynamic is one where the child is told she’s superior in every way, (looks, personality, intellect, talents, etc.), can do no wrong, that she is perfect and
can do anything with ease. She is told how advanced she was growing up and how there is nothing she cannot do. As this child develops, she feels obligated to live up to the expectations of the family, certain she cannot keep up the act forever, regardless of the fact that she cannot complete every task with ease. She begins to doubt herself and her abilities; she begins to distrust her family and their judgement of her. Attending college further exacerbates these feelings. She performs well, but she has to put forth a lot of effort. This contradicts her parent’s label of perfection with ease and she sees that she cannot live up to their standard, that she is not a genius and so she must be an intellectual impostor (Clance & Imes, 1978).

According to Clance and Imes (1978), IP begins to develop in young women in relation to the family and the root of the issue is social expectations. “The fact that these women continue to succeed in spite of antithetical societal expectations implies strong early instilment of achievement motivation” (p. 243). This happens as early as 10 years of age. It appeared that women in the sensitive group develop self-doubts in their abilities because of the disparities between their actual high achievements and the perception that they are not bright. Thoughts of self-doubt in the bright group develop when the young females find disparities in what they can actually achieve compared to what they are expected to achieve.

There are, however, discrepancies in the investigations surrounding IP (Holmes, Kertay, Adamson, Holland, & Clance, 1993). There are methodological flaws such as the use of a sample of people expected to be prone to impostorism. In addition, different researchers may have each used different scales to rate impostorism. Furthermore, researchers may have used a median split to report the data. In a median split, subjects
are divided into high- and low-impostorism groups, but there may be false-positives, false-negatives, and marginal impostors in the groups that dilute the results.

Harvey and Katz (1985) later asserted that impostor phenomenon is not limited by gender or to highly successful individuals and that impostorism can be experienced by any individual faced with achievement tasks. Awareness of feelings of impostorism motivate women to override them but this is something that must be brought to their attention. Men were not as affected because they had support from outside sources; mentors, faculty, and society in general consistently encouraged them to overcome their fears and reach for success. In addition, women do not have the ability “to resolve certain dilemmas from childhood” (Clance & O'Toole, 1988, p. 53).

Impostorism studies in higher education. A recent study with a large sample size was published on the impostor phenomenon in higher education. Vaughn et al. (2019) explored the prevalence of impostor phenomenon and its relationship with motivation in women in higher education. They recognized a global problem that women equal and sometimes eclipse men among undergraduates but “the same cannot be said for doctorate completion, tenured faculty status, and senior administrative positions in higher education” (Vaughn et al., p. 1). Could this potentially be due to feelings of impostorism? Over a thousand participants completed an online survey using the CIPS to calculate impostorism, in addition to three other scales to assess motivation and included graduate students, academics, faculty, and administrators in higher education. The mean score for IP in this group of women \( N = 1,326 \) was 66.84 indicating frequent feeling of impostorism. Since student affairs professionals were neither highlighted in this study, the current study also used a survey methodology to discover if student affairs
professionals also exhibited frequent feelings of impostorism. No other studies have been found on impostorism in higher education specifically with student affairs professionals.

**Impostorism-burnout studies in helping fields.** Very few studies have directly examined the link between impostorism and burnout. Hutchins (2015) examined the prevalence of impostorism in faculty experiences and its effects on their perceived emotional exhaustion and coping skills. Participants \((N = 61)\) completed the CIPS and exhibited *moderate* feelings of impostorism \((M = 57.5)\) with untenured faculty exhibiting higher scores than their tenured counterparts. Hutchins (2015) used a portion of the Maslach Burnout Inventory to assess perceived emotional exhaustion/burnout and the Brief COPE scale to assess participant coping skills and found a “strong positive and statistically significant relationship among impostor thoughts and emotional exhaustion” (p. 6). The present study attempted to build on this study by focusing on student affairs professionals specifically.

The relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout was examined in surgeons as well as medical students. Legassie et al. (2008) explored impostorism and burnout in a group of 48 internal medicine residents. They used the CIPS and the MBI along with a demographic questionnaire to measure impostorism and burnout via a mailing. The mean score for IP was 61.2 indicating *frequent feelings* of impostorism and almost one third of the participants exhibited *high levels* of emotional exhaustion; however, no significant relationship was found between impostorism and emotional exhaustion (Legassie et al., 2008).
Impostor phenomenon and burnout were also explored using an online survey in medical students from one program ($N = 138$) (Villwock et al., 2016). Participants were asked to complete the Young Impostor Scale which dichotomizes the presence of impostorism, along with the MBI for human services to measure burnout. In this study, however, impostorism was positively associated with emotional exhaustion. Thus, there continues to be inconclusive evidence to the impostorism-burnout link.

Leach et al. (2019) conducted a study on surgeons where participants completed two unlinked, blinded surveys which included the CIPS and a single–item measure of burnout. Aside from the demographic questionnaire, the current study most closely replicated these survey questions. Leach et al. (2019) found surgical residents scored substantially higher than surgical faculty in impostorism, $M = 61$ and 51 respectively, and found a positive relationship between impostorism and burnout. Leach et al. (2019) found no gender difference in IP scores but found faculty to exhibit lower scores on the CIPS than trainees and residents. Furthermore, while it could not be determined “how impostor phenomenon and burnout directly impact each other, [the] study shows that both faculty and trainees experiencing burnout are more likely to report symptoms of impostor phenomenon” (Leach et al., 2019, p. 99).

Collectively, these studies suggest that there are mixed findings. One study reported that although there were frequent feelings of impostorism and almost one third of the participants exhibited high levels of emotional exhaustion, no significant relationship was found between impostorism and emotional exhaustion. However, other studies showed a significantly positive relationship between impostorism and burnout or impostorism with emotional exhaustion (Hutchins, 2015; Leach et al., 2019; Villwock et
al., 2016). This study attempted to fill in the gap in the literature by empirically investigating the association between impostorism and burnout in student affairs professionals. While IP has been examined in higher education professionals and faculty (Parkman, 2016; Vaughn, Taasoobshirazi, & Johnson, 2019), it has not been addressed in student affairs professionals. Additionally, IP and burnout have been examined together among medical students, residents, and surgeons (Leach et al., 2019; Legassie et al., 2008; Villwock et al., 2016), but they have not been examined in the context of student affairs professionals.

**Summary**

Impostor phenomenon and burnout are certainly prevalent in student affairs. Based on the anchor studies presented, impostorism and burnout merit research in the field. It is important to study the relationship of impostorism and burnout in student affairs professionals and they have implications in the field when considering graduate programs, the workplace environment, and also continuing education and professional development. Chapter 3 highlights the research methodology used for this study.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

This chapter will explain the research design and method used to analyze impostor phenomenon and burnout among higher education professionals currently working in the field of student affairs. It includes research context, research participants, instruments used in data collection, procedures for data analysis and concludes with a summary.

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, there continue to be inconclusive evidence on the relationship between impostorism on burnout, especially in student affairs professionals. While there have been studies to examine the effects of impostorism on other topics such as parenting styles (Li et al., 2014), perfectionism (Dudau, 2014), self-esteem (Garwick et al., 2011), impact on specific groups of people (Cokley et al., 2013; Vaughn et al., 2019), and narcissists (Kaufman et al., 2018), the researcher found no studies focused on student affairs professionals specifically. Studies examining the potential relationship of impostor phenomenon and burnout in higher education are limited (Parkman, 2016). One line of studies has examined the link between impostor phenomenon and burnout in surgeons and others in the medical field (Leach et al., 2019; Legassie et al., 2008; Villwock et al., 2016). Medical professionals, however, are similar to student affairs professions in that both job roles make them susceptible to compassion fatigue. Student affairs professionals also have repeated interactions with individuals who are experiencing emotional distress (Hoang, 2013) which can lead to feelings of burnout.
While a majority of the previous studies have utilized quantitative designs for one or two 
sites or regions, few have surveyed professionals from across the country or used large 
sample sizes of student affairs professionals.

Thus, the purpose of this quantitative online study was to (a) describe the 
prevalence of U.S. student affairs professionals experiencing both impostorism and 
burnout; (b) examine any potential significant interrelationships between impostorism 
and burnout; and (c) explore any demographic differences among U.S. student affairs 
professionals experiencing both impostorism and burnout at work.

Research Question 1 asked: How prevalent is impostorism and burnout in U.S. 
student affairs professionals? While Hutchins (2015) found that tenured and untenured 
college faculty reported moderate and intense levels of impostorism respectively, and 
impostorism scores were positively related to emotional exhaustion scores, student affairs 
professionals in this study were expected to fall in the middle and report frequent feelings 
of impostorism (Hypothesis 1).

Research Question 2 asked: What is the predictive relationship between 
impostorism (predictor) and burnout (outcome) among U.S. student affairs professionals? 
Individuals with self-reported impostorism tend to feel the need to work harder to make 
sure others do not see them as the frauds, despite feeling like fraud themselves. 
Individuals with impostorism tend to seek perfection from themselves and to minimize 
mistakes and failures by working harder and longer hours (Parkman, 2016). This, in turn, 
increases stress and anxiety levels, which is often the precursor to burnout. Thus, 
Hypothesis 2 stated that feelings of burnout will also be present in those student affairs 
professional exhibiting impostorism; that is, as the intensity of self-reported impostorism
increases, the more likely student affairs professionals will also report feelings of burnout.

Research Question 3 asked: Are there any demographic differences among U.S. student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? According to Hypothesis 3, significant demographic differences are expected, in gender (Badawy, Gazdag, Bentley, & Brouer, 2018; Villwock et al., 2016), race (Cokley et al., 2013) and time as seen in age, degree, and time in position or the field (Leach et al., 2019).

Research Context

This study was conducted solely online through the use of a Qualtrics survey tool. Online survey tools are convenient for both the researcher and participant. All data was automatically entered into the system when the participant submitted their responses. This avoided an additional step for the researcher having to enter all the data from a paper survey and also eliminated the risk of inaccurately inputting responses by anyone other than the respondent. It was also convenient for the participants because they were able to provide responses using any electronic device that had access to the internet. Online surveys are low cost, there is access to the result in real-time, there is generally an increased response rate, and there is no potential influence from a researcher being present while conducting the survey (Creswell, 2014; Fielding et al., 2008).

A potential disadvantage to the online survey tool is that the researcher could not prevent any one respondent from completing the survey more than once, potentially skewing the data. This is particularly true in this study because no identifiers (name, e-mail, IP address, etc.) were collected as part of the survey to facilitate single responses per participant. The researcher also had to trust the participant would accurately self-
report his or her true feelings and beliefs on all the questions. Finally, participants may have overlooked the electronic requests to participate and simply deleted the survey instead of choosing to participate.

The researcher did not exclude any SAPs based on age, race, gender, level of education, years of experience, type of institution at which they work, title, or years of service. Current employment in student affairs was the only qualifier. To maintain anonymity of the participants, no identifiable information was collected in this survey. Responses to the survey were only accessible by users with permission to view responses (the researcher) and only aggregate data from the study was reported. The study was reviewed by the IRB at St. John Fisher College and also at CUNY Kingsborough Community College. Final IRB approval was received from St. John Fisher College to complete the study and Kingsborough Community College provided a letter of support to the candidate (Appendix A).

**Research Participants**

The researcher used two sampling strategies. First, participants were recruited through a convenience sample using listservs (CUNY Student Life Directors), social media platforms (Facebook), and through a national student affairs organization membership e-mail correspondence (ACPA). All communications and invitations to participate in this study were through e-mail, by flyer or posts on social media pages. (Appendix B). Convenience sampling is made up of individuals who are easy to reach. It is a form of non-probability sampling and does not include a random selection of participants (Creswell, 2014). Some benefits of using a convenience sample are that it is cost effective, easy to get a sample as participants are readily available, and it is easy to
analyze. Some disadvantages are that it may not represent the larger population, there
may be an inadvertent under- or over-representation of the population, results may be
biased and it could be hard to replicate for future studies (Glen, 2015).

A second strategy used in the present study was snowball sampling. Snowball
sampling was also used to recruit additional participants as individuals taking the survey
couraged other peers in student affairs to also participate. Research participants self-
identified as currently employed, higher education professionals in the field of student
affairs (Glen, 2015).

The researcher found various types of institutions (2-year, 4-year, public, and
private, in various locations across the United States) from which to collect participants
in an effort to find an adequate cross section of the sample. The researcher garnered
letters of support from several vice presidents of student affairs (VPSA) at various
institutions within a large, public, urban university system as well as from a public, 4-
year, state institution, who were willing to distribute the online survey tool to their
respective staff. One VPSA also agreed to share the tool with the approximately 600
students enrolled in their campus’ master’s in higher education program. An e-mail was
sent to the VPSAs on February 21, 2020 to share with their staff.

In addition, permission was granted from one of the largest student affairs interest
pages on Facebook, a social media platform, to post about the study. This group has over
33,000 individuals who are self-identified as working in the field of student affairs either
currently or have in the past. Individuals have to request to be accepted into the group by
a set of administrators by answering a few questions about their job roles to confirm they
are currently in the field; the researcher has been a member since December, 2019. The Facebook group post was made on February 24, 2020.

Furthermore, the researcher is a member (since 2009) of the American College Personnel Association. ACPA is an international organization with almost 7,500 members from 1,200 private and public institutions across the country and globe. Membership is comprised of graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in higher education administration or student affairs programs, faculty and student affairs educators, SAPs of all levels, as well as companies and organizations involved in the campus marketplace. ACPA is the “leading comprehensive student affairs association that advances student affairs and engages students for a lifetime of learning and discovery” (ACPA, 2018, p. 1). An e-mail was sent out to the membership on February 25, 2020 encouraging them to participate in the study and to also share the link with their fellow SAP colleagues and friends.

This study focused on professionals in higher education, specifically those in the field of student affairs. For the purposes of this study, the researcher used the definition of student affairs from the American College Personnel Association website about student affairs professionals:

Department and program areas typically associated with student affairs include residence life, commuter services, graduate student services, admissions, new student orientation, financial aid, counseling centers, advising centers, leadership development, Greek affairs, student activities, student unions, leadership development, community service, service learning, career planning and placement, discipline and judicial affairs, alumni relations and development,
services for students with disabilities, developmental learning services, and advocacy and support programs (e.g., for students of color, lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender students, veterans, women, international students, adults) (Love, 2003)

The researcher did not exclude any SAPs based on age, race, gender, level of education, years of experience, type of institution at which they work, title, or years of service. Current employment in student affairs was the only qualifier for participation.

**Data Collection Instruments**

Data was collected using an online survey tool through Qualtrics. An online methodology was used in an effort to reach more respondents from across the country. The online survey instrument used to collect data was made up of four parts: the Consent Form, Demographic Questionnaire, the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and a single-item question to measure burnout (Appendix C). In addition, participants were asked to confirm that they currently work in student affairs.

**The consent form (CF).**  The CF was the first screen of the Qualtrics survey the participant viewed. The form provided information about the study, reminded participants that their participation was voluntary and informed them that they could exit the survey by closing their browser window at any time. If a participant existed the survey prior to completion, data already submitted was purged and not included in this research. The CF also included the contact information of the researcher, information about the study, as well as a clause on informed consent. Participants granted consent to the researcher by clicking *agree* to continue.
Next, participants were asked to affirm that they currently worked in the field of student affairs. They were provided a list of departments and programs typically associated with student affairs per ACPA and informed that graduate assistantships counted as employment for the purposes of this study. Those who affirmed by clicking yes were directed to the remaining survey questions and those who clicked no were taken to the end of the study and thanked for their time.

The demographic questionnaire, (DQ). The DQ was an 8-item, self-reported demographic questionnaire that was be used to assess the participant’s self-reported demographic characteristics including gender, age, ethnicity/race, level of education, years of higher education experience, the type of institution at which they worked, their current role, and time in their current position. This tool was developed for this study in order to see if any relationships between impostor phenomenon, burnout and any of these characteristics were present.

The Clance Impostor Phenomenon scale. The CIPS (Clance, 1985) was a 20-item, self-reported questionnaire used to assess an individual’s self-reported characteristics of impostor phenomenon that determined the degree to which they experienced impostorism. Using a Likert 5-point response scale, participants were asked to read a statement and self-report how true the statement was for them. Participants were encouraged to select the first response that entered their mind rather than overthinking, as dwelling on a response could have affect their overall score. The scale for each statement ranged from very true (5) to not true at all (1). The total score for the overall CIPS was calculated by adding up all the individual ratings and ranged from 20 to 100. The higher the score, the more intense the feelings of impostorism felt by the
individual. A total score of 40 or less indicated the participant had few characteristics; scores 41-60 reflected moderate experiences of impostorism; those scoring 61-80 were participants who frequently experienced characteristics; and scores above 80 indicated intense feelings of impostorism (Clance, 1985). Adequate internal consistency estimates ranging from .84 (Prince, 1989) to .96 (Holmes et al., 1993) were previously determined. In addition, Holmes et al. (1993) determined that the CIPS can reliably differentiate impostors from non-impostors (Chrisman, Pieper, Clance, Holland, & Glickauf-Hughes, 1995). Permission to use this scale was granted to the researcher by Dr. Pauline R. Clance (Appendix D).

The most widely used measure of burnout was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), a 22-item multidimensional measure. The three dimensions are: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA). The MBI is limiting, however, because it is proprietary and carries license fees. In addition, some participants may have been reluctant to spend their time on such a long assessment (Dolan et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, the researcher was most interested in the measure of burnout associated with emotional exhaustion. EE is “suggested as the essential component of burnout and is often used as the central measure” (Rohland, Kruse, & Rohrer, 2004, p. 76). Emotional exhaustion also dictates one’s self-diagnosis of burnout making the SIMB particularly relevant being that participants will be asked to self-assess their level of burnout based on their personal definition (Rohland et al., 2004).

**The single-item measure of burnout (SIMB).** (Schmoldt, Freeborn, & Klevit, 1994). For this study, the researcher elected to use a validated, single-item measure to determine burnout similar to a line of recent studies (Leach et al., 2019; Rohland et al.,
2004; West, Drybye, Sloan, & Shanafelt, 2009). The SIMB was a one-item, self-report question with five choices used to assess the level of burnout in the participants. The SIMB instructed participants: “Using your own definition of “burnout,” please select one of the following answers”. Responses included:

1. “I enjoy my work. I have no symptoms of burnout.”
2. “I am under stress, and don’t always have as much energy as I did, but I don’t feel burned out.”
3. “I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, e.g., emotional exhaustion.”
4. “The symptoms of burnout that I am experiencing won’t go away. I think about work frustrations a lot.”
5. “I feel completely burned out. I am at the point where I may need to seek help.”

The SIMB was first used by Schmoldt et al. in their 1994 report of physician burnout as part of the Physician Worklife Study. It was validated against the MBI-EE by Rohland et al. (2004). Their Hypothesis stated that “if the single-item question measures the same characteristics as the [MBI], then it could serve as a practical alternative to the [MBI] in assessing burnout” (Rohland et al., 2004). They found that the scores of the national norms of the [MBI] for emotional exhaustion were very close to that of their study sample answering the single question, and as such a found the single-item measure a viable substitute.
**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

The 32-question survey was administered electronically via Qualtrics, and took approximately 5-8 minutes to complete. Participants accessed the survey via a link in an e-mail, via a website address or through a QR code printed on a flyer. A QR code is a type of barcode that is readable by a smartphone camera that can direct to a contact, a URL, or different words or text (What is a QR Code?, n.d.).

First, participants were provided information about the purpose of the study as well as any potential risk of the study. They were then asked to grant consent to participate by clicking agree. The following screen asked participants to affirm they were currently employed as a student affairs professional. Those who clicked *disagree* to the first question or *no* to the second, were taken to the end of the survey and thanked for their time. Next, participants were prompted to complete an eight-item demographic questionnaire, followed by 20 questions from the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and a single question about burnout. Participants were able to exit the survey at any time without consequence.

The researcher chose to design a quantitative study to conduct the research to determine if a relationship exists between impostor phenomenon and burnout in SAPs. A qualitative study was considered, but due to time constraints, it was not selected. In addition, a qualitative study would not have been suitable because it usually includes open ended questions that often lead to the creation of a theory or it is used to investigate a phenomenon not already well researched for it to be explored and understood (Creswell, 2014), which the researcher did not seek to accomplish.
A quantitative study seeks to find the relationship among variables (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) recommends a quantitative study for social research problem that call for “(a) the identification of factors that influence outcome, (b) the utility of an intervention, or (c) understanding the best predictors of outcomes” (p. 20). The researcher used the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale to measure feelings of impostorism in the participants and a single-item measure to assess burnout in addition to a demographic questionnaire.

Due to the time constraints, a longitudinal study where data is collected over time, was not selected. Instead, a cross sectional analysis where the data is collected at one point in time was implemented (Creswell, 2014). The survey was open for 1 week and the goal was to get at least 200 responses.

Three different analyses via SPSS 25.0 was used to answer the three specified hypotheses: (a) one-sample $t$-test, (b) simple linear regression, and (c) sequential multiple regression. For Hypothesis 1, the outcome variable specified was SAP impostorism. The one-sample $t$-test provided the means to test the observed impostorism mean derived from a sample against a theoretical mean assumed to exist in the population. In this case, the theoretical mean was specified to be 60, given that the range for individuals with moderate burnout was identified in the literature as 40-60. Findings from this test would reveal if the observed burnout mean of SAPs is statistically different from the specified theoretical mean (i.e. .60).

The second test used to test the relationship between impostorism and burnout was a simple linear regression. The dependent variable was burnout while the predictor variable was impostorism. Findings reveal the slope of the regression line, $R$, $R$-squared
 Sequential multiple regression was used to determine if demographic and worker characteristics interacted with the relationship between impostorism and burnout. Basically, the test will answer if, after controlling for a specified characteristics (e.g., gender), is there a relationship between impostorism and burnout. The test allows the researcher to determine \( R\text{-squared change} \), meaning that after removing the variance associated with the specified demographic/work characteristic, the amount of observed variance left (\( R\text{-squared change} \)) determines the strength of relationship between impostorism and burnout.

After IRB approval was secured, the Qualtrics survey was open for 1 week for individuals to participate. As responses were submitted, Qualtrics automatically recorded and compiled the data. Data was then imported to SPSS for analysis and reported on by the researcher. Results of the study are presented in Chapter 4.

**Chapter Summary**

While research on impostor phenomenon exists in the field of higher education, there are not any studies specifically on student affairs professionals. Some studies have found an interaction between impostorism and burnout in the medical field, but the researcher did not find any studies in the context of higher education, specifically in student affairs. This study fills a gap in the current research by examining impostorism and burnout amongst SAPs. Through collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher builds on current information available with the intent to determine degree of burnout and
impostorism in student affairs professionals, if burnout and impostor phenomenon are statistically related, and if SAP characteristics affect this relationship. Results can help to develop initiatives to decrease impostorism and prevent burnout in student affairs.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to further explore the prevalence and interrelationships between impostor phenomenon and burnout in student affairs professionals. More specifically, this method used was designed to (a) describe the prevalence of student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism, (b) examine any potential significant interrelationships between self-reported attitudes and feelings related to impostorism and perceptions of burnout, and (c) explore any demographic differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout. This chapter will include the research questions and hypotheses, the achieved online sample, and the specific descriptive and regression analyses used to test the hypotheses.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1 asked: How prevalent is impostorism and burnout among student affairs professionals? While Hutchins (2015) found that tenured and untenured college faculty reported moderate and intense levels of impostorism respectively, student affairs professionals in this study were expected to fall in the middle and report frequent feelings of impostorism (Hypothesis 1).

RQ2 asked: What is the predictive relationship between impostorism (predictor) and burnout (outcome) among U.S. student affairs professionals? Individuals with self-reported impostorism tend to feel the need to work harder to make sure others do not see them as the frauds, despite feeling like fraud themselves (Clance & O’Toole, 1988).
Individuals with impostorism tend to seek perfection from themselves and to minimize mistakes and failures by working harder and longer hours (Parkman, 2016). This, in turn, increases stress and anxiety levels, which is often the precursor to burnout. In a similar study focused on higher education, Hutchins (2015) found that impostorism scores were positively related to emotional exhaustion scores among college faculty members. Thus, Hypothesis 2 states that feelings of burnout will also be present in those student affairs professional exhibiting impostorism. The intensity of self-reported impostorism was expected to increase along with feelings of burnout.

RQ3 asked: Are there any demographic differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? Previous imposter-burnout studies have found some significant demographic differences with respect to gender (Badawy et al., 2018; Villwock et al., 2016), race (Cokley et al., 2013) and regarding age, degree and time in position or the field (Leach et al., 2019). Thus, demographic differences were also expected among SAPs.

Data Analysis and Findings

Preliminary analyses. An e-mail regarding the research was sent to various vice presidents of student affairs (VPSA) at different institutions of higher education explaining the purpose of the study. Once the VPSA agreed to distribute the instrument to their respective staff, the researcher e-mailed a flyer along with the link to the survey for dissemination. In addition, an invitation to participate in the study was e-mailed to the current membership of ACPA, the American College Personnel Association. Furthermore, the study was posted on several student affairs or higher education focused
Facebook groups. The respondents were given 1 week to respond; no reminders were sent. Only fully completed surveys were included in the final analysis.

The online survey opened on February 21, 2020 and closed on February 28, 2020 yielding a total sample of 762 respondents. However, only the data from 742 respondents were used to test the three hypotheses. During data screening process, 20 respondents were removed entirely due to incomplete survey data; meaning, they had skipped some questions and answered less than 50% of the survey. Secondly, 18 individuals had a few missing data on the CIPS impostorism instrument and four individuals had a few missing data on the single-item measure of burnout (SIMB) question. In order to address this minor problem, series mean were used to replace all CIPS and SIMB missing data to ensure continuity of data. No attempt was made to fill in missing data from demographic questions.

The descriptive demographic data of student affairs professionals (gender, age, ethnicity/race, and level of education and four questions pertaining to work demographics: years of higher education experience, type of institution at which they worked, current role, and time in their current position) are presented below.

**Gender/gender identity.** As shown in Table 4.1, 75% of the student affairs professional online respondents identified as female while only 21% identified as male. Approximately 2% selected gender non-conforming while an additional 2% selected other. One respondent did not complete the question.
Table 4.1

*Frequency Summary of the Gender/Gender Identity Statuses of the Student Affairs Professional Online Respondents (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender non-conforming</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents self-identified on an online survey.

**Age groups.** Table 4.2 provides the summary of the age groups. Participants were asked to select their age range from a list of eight options ranging from 18 to 60+. In total, 740 answered the question while two individuals failed to respond. Almost half (49%) of the online sample ranged in age from 25-34 years. The most frequent was the 25-29 age group (31%) followed by the 30-34 age group (18%). The 18-24 age group made up approximately 13% of the sample while the 35-39 group made up another 13% of the sample. About 22% of the sample reported being between the ages of 40 and 59 while only 2% reported being 60 or over.
Table 4.2

*Frequency Summary of the Age Groups of the Student Affairs Professional Online Respondents (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents self-identified on an online survey.

**Racial/ethnic identity.** Table 4.3 provides the summary of the racial/ethnic identity groups. Student affairs professionals were asked: “How do you describe your racial/ethnic identity?” The majority of professionals (n = 520) reported being White (70.1%) while 84 reported being Black (11.3%). Latino or Hispanic only constituted 9.4% of the sample while Asians made up approximately 2.4% of the sample. Approximately 5.3% reported identifying with two or more races and about 1.4% reported either other/unknown or *prefer not to say*. One person did not respond to the question.
Table 4.3

*Frequency Summary of the Racial/Ethnic Identity Status of the Student Affairs Professional Online Respondents (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Identity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx or Hispanic</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents self-identified on an online survey.

**Education level.** Table 4.4 provides the summary of the education levels among the online sample. Participants were asked to respond to the question: “Select your highest level of education.” Three options were presented to respondents: bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and doctorate/other terminal degree. Based on frequency of responses, a majority of this online sample had a master’s degree (n = 513, 69%). The second highest group had bachelors’ degrees (n = 127, 17%). The third group had a doctorate or other terminal degree (n = 99, 13.3%). Three respondents did not complete the question.
Table 4.4

*Frequency Summary of Highest Level of Education of Student Affairs Professional*

*Online Respondents (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate/other terminal degree</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents self-identified on an online survey.

Tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8 display the descriptive summary of student affairs professional workplace demographics: (a) years of higher education experience, (b) type of institution at which they work, (c) current role, and (d) time in their current position (N = 742). All participants were asked to respond to the question: “How long have you worked in higher education?” Six options ranging from 0-4 years to 25+ years were presented to respondents. Overall, 62.3% had less than 10 years of experience working in a higher education setting. Based on frequency of responses, 281 (38%) had 0-4 years of experience in a higher education setting, followed by 181 (24.4%) who had 5-9 years of experience in a higher education setting.
Table 4.5

*Frequency Summary of Student Affairs Professionals’ Years Worked in Higher Education Setting (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Worked in Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+ years</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher education settings range from undergraduate to graduate schools.

Table 4.6 provides the summary of higher education institutions where the student affairs professionals in this study worked. From the sample, 80% of SAPs reported working at an undergraduate institution, while only 9.0% and 8.4% reported working at a graduate school or a community college, respectively. Approximately 2.7% reported working an “other” institution and two respondents did not complete the question.
Table 4.6

*Frequency Summary of the Types of Higher Education Institutions Where the Student Affairs Professionals Worked (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Institution</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College (2-year institution)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate College (4-year institution)</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents self-identified on an online survey.

Table 4.7 provides the summary of *current job level or rank as self-reported by SAPs on the online survey*. From the sample, 38% of SAPs reported working as a mid-level manager while 31.8% and 14.4% reported working as an entry level employee or a graduate assistant respectively. Approximately 11.5% reported working as a senior manager and 3.9% of respondents self-selected working in some “other” position. Two participants did not complete the question.
Table 4.7

*Frequency Summary of Student Affairs Professionals’ Current Job Level/Rank*

*(N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Job Level/Rank</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistant</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Level</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Level Manager</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 provides the summary of years worked in current role as reported by SAPs. From this sample, a majority had limited experience in their current role – 78% of SAPs reported working 0-4 years. Other responses were as follows: 15.5% and 3.9% reported working 5-9 years and 10-14 years respectively, and 2.8% reported working 15 years or longer.
Table 4.8

Frequency Summary of Student Affairs Professionals’ Years Worked in Current Role (N = 742)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Worked in Current Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+ years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preliminary reliability analyses.** The data obtained from the CIPS survey was tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha. The theoretical estimated reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) ranges between 0 and 1. As a rule, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.90 and above is excellent, 0.80 to 0.89 is good, 0.70 to 0.79 is acceptable, 0.60 to 0.69 is questionable, 0.50 to 0.59 is poor, and less than 0.5 is unacceptable (Norusis, 2009). Accordingly, Cronbach’s alpha for the CIPS was .96, ItemN = 20. Thus, the online CIPS survey with these student affairs respondents had very strong reliability.

**Preliminary test of normality.** Before the research questions were analyzed, basic parametric assumptions were assessed for regression and sequential multiple regression. In this study, the parametric assumptions for these latent constructs were assumed to be normal, and as such, did not violate parametric assumptions. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were tested. Normality, linearity and
homoscedasticity for the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (Clance, 1985) and the single-item measure of burnout construct were evaluated via residual plots and $z$-skew and $z$-kurtosis coefficients. When using regression-type tests, rather than relying on visual inspection of residual plots, normality is best tested by way of $z$-skew coefficients. Skew and kurtosis coefficients were divided by their respective skew/kurtosis standard error, resulting in $z$-skew/$z$-kurtosis coefficient. This technique was recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Specifically, $z$-skew/$z$-kurtosis coefficients exceeding the critical range between -3.29 and +3.29 ($p < .001$) may indicate non-normality. Thus, based on the evaluation of the $z$-skew/ $z$-kurtosis coefficients, CIPS and burnout did not exceed normal critical values. In other words, the parametric assumptions about normality were met and the regression and sequential multiple regressions could be run to test the hypotheses. Table 4.9 displays descriptive statistics for each of the latent constructs specified in the study.

Table 4.9

*Descriptive Statistics for Burnout and Impostorism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.047</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.559</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIPS</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>64.8854</td>
<td>15.9203</td>
<td>-0.322</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.617</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Valid N (listwise) = 742*

The max and min $z$-skew coefficient of -2.63 and 2.20 for CIPS and -1.88 and 1.91 for burnout does not exceed critical value of +/- 3.29 (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2) respectively. Given the residuals were observed to be mostly normally distributed and the $z$-skew/$z$-kurtosis coefficients did not exceed their critical value, it was assumed that the
two latent constructs (CIPS and burnout) were normally distributed. Thus, the normal distribution can be witnessed in Figure 4.1 CIPS z-score histogram and Figure 4.2 burnout z-score histogram.

The max and min z-skew coefficient of -2.63 and 2.20 for CIPS and -1.88 and 1.91 for burnout does not exceed critical value of +/- 3.29 (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2) respectively. Given the residuals were observed to be mostly normally distributed and the z-skew/z-kurtosis coefficients did not exceed their critical value, it was assumed that the two latent constructs (CIPS and burnout) were normally distributed. Thus, the normal distribution can be witnessed in Figure 4.1 CIPS z-score histogram and Figure 4.2 burnout z-score histogram.

![Histogram](image)

**Figure 4.1.** Histogram displaying z-skew scores for IP.
Figure 4.2. Histogram displaying $z$-skew scores for burnout.

**Analysis of Research Question 1**

RQ1 asked: How prevalent is impostorism and burnout among student affairs professionals? It was expected that student affairs professionals in this study would exhibit frequent feelings of impostorism (Hypothesis 1).

In order to test Hypothesis 1a (burnout), descriptive statistics were run revealing that this sample had an average 2.99 response ($SD = 1$) on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. As you recall from Chapter 3, the single-item burnout measure ranged from 1 to 5 with the following descriptors: “Using your own definition of ‘burnout,’ please select one of the following answers.” Responses included:

1. “I enjoy my work. I have no symptoms of burnout.”
2. “I am under stress, and don’t always have as much energy as I did, but I don’t feel burned out.”
3. “I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, e.g., emotional exhaustion.”

4. “The symptoms of burnout that I am experiencing won’t go away. I think about work frustrations a lot.”

5. “I feel completely burned out. I am at the point where I may need to seek help.”

Essentially, the sample reported a 3 (“I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, e.g., emotional exhaustion.”). However, some ranged from 2 (“I am under stress, and don’t always have as much energy as I did, but I don’t feel burned out.”) to 4 (“The symptoms of burnout that I am experiencing won’t go away. I think about work frustrations a lot.”) on this single-item measure.

In order to test Hypothesis 1b (impostorism), a one sample t-test via SPSS 25.0 was run. A one sample t-test is used to test the means of a distribution against a theoretical mean to determine if the observed mean is statistically different from the theoretical mean. In this case, the theoretical mean was specified as 60, which is the high threshold for moderate IP. Specifically,

- scores of 40 or less reflect few characteristics of impostorism;
- scores between 41-60 reflect moderate experiences of impostorism;
- scores between 61-80 reflect frequent experiences of impostorism (Hypothesis 1 met with SAP mean = 64.85)
- scores above 80 reflect intense feelings of impostorism (Clance, 1985)

As indicated in Table 4.9, an observed mean of 64.885 shows student affairs professionals in this sample frequently experienced characteristics of IP. Results from
the one-sample *t*-test indicated a significant difference between the theoretical mean of 60 and the observed mean of 64.85, *p* < .001. These findings indicated that student affairs professionals in this online sample self-reported that they experienced a significantly higher level of impostorism than the theoretical mean (Table 4.10). These student affairs self-reported having *frequent* experiences of impostorism on this online survey.

Table 4.10

*Summary of the T-test Statistics for One Sample t-test of CIPS Impostorism Scale among Online College Student Professional Respondents (N = 742)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIPS Total</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>64.885</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>0.584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIPS Total</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>Mean Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.359</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Test value = 60

**Analysis of Research Question 2**

RQ2 asked: What is the relationship between impostorism and burnout among student affairs professionals? Hypothesis 2 stated that feelings of burnout will also be present in those student affairs professional exhibiting impostorism; that is, as feelings of self-reported impostorism increases, student affairs professionals will also report more feelings of burnout. Hypothesis 2 was tested using a linear regression analysis using SPSS 25.0. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout scores among online student affairs professionals; that is, both impostorism and burnout increased in the same direction \[ R (1,740) = .292, p < .001; .019, r\text{-squared} = .085 \]. An *r*-square value of .085 means that 8.5% of the reason why burnout varies among these student affairs professionals is due to their impostorism.
scores. This data suggests that impostorism is a small, yet significant, predictor of burnout scores among these 742 respondents.

A scatterplot was displayed to visually portray the slope of the regression line ($B = .019$). $B$ is the unstandardized Beta coefficient that indicates the increase in burnout for every one value increase in impostorism (i.e., from 40 to 41). The regression equation is used to estimate the level of burnout based on an observed impostorism score. Thus, the regression equation from the test is: $y = 1.75 + .02x$ where $y$ is burnout, 1.75 is the constant, .02 is the Beta value, and $x$ is some observed value of impostorism (Figure 4.3).

![Figure 4.3. Scatterplot of Burnout as a function of CIPS](image)

**Analysis of Research Question 3**

RQ3 asked: Are there any demographic differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? According to Hypothesis 3, significant demographic differences were expected for those who were new to the field or
had recently taken on a new position. Hypotheses 3a-3e were tested to see if there were any significant differences in the impostorism-burnout relationship when controlling for gender, age, job level/rank, time in higher education, and time in current role.

**Gender differences.** Hypothesis 3a was tested using sequential multiple regression using SPSS 25.0. Sequential multiple regression provided the means to determine if gender affects the relationship between impostorism and the single-item burnout question. For the gender analysis, only participants identifying as male or female were used in this analysis (N = 709). The sequential multiple regression specified gender as the control variable, impostorism as the predictor variable, and burnout as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 4.11, findings revealed that gender did not affect the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout; Model 1, $F(1,707) = 2.164$, $p\text{-change} = .142$; Model 2, $F(1,706) = 60.852$, $p\text{-change} = < .001$. In other words, no gender differences were found among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout.

Table 4.11

*Summary of the Sequential Regression Model Coefficients using Gender Identity as a Control Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>Std. Error of</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R Square Estimate</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig. F Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.055a</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>1.042</td>
<td>2.164</td>
<td>1 707 0.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.287b</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>60.852 1 706 &lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Model 1 Predictors: (Constant), gender identity?
b Model 2 Predictors: (Constant), gender identity, CIPS Total
c Dependent Variable: Burnout

Figure 4.4 displays the regression slopes for male and female SAP participants. Although an interaction is observed, the strength of the interaction was not significant. This means that the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout was not affected by gender type.

![Figure 4.4](image)

**Figure 4.4.** Regression model displaying the slope of the regression lines for male and female.

**Age range differences.** Are there any differences in age group among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? Hypothesis 3b was tested using a sequential multiple regression via SPSS 25.0. The sequential multiple regression specified age as the control variable, impostorism as the predictor variable, and burnout
as the dependent variable. Only the 740 SAP participants who identified their age range were used in this analysis. Findings revealed that age range did not affect the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout; Model 1, $F_{\text{change}}(1,738) = 7.508$, $p_{-\text{change}} = .006$; Model 2, $F_{\text{change}}(1,737) = 60.852$, $p_{-\text{change}} = < .001$. As shown in Table 4.12, no age group differences were found among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout.

Table 4.12

*Sequential Regression Model Coefficients Using Age Range as a Control Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R$ Square</th>
<th>Adjusted $R$ Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$R$ Square Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.100a</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>1.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.287b</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Model 1 Predictors: (Constant), Age range  
b Model 2 Predictors: (Constant), age identity, CIPS Total  
c Dependent Variable: Burnout

Figure 4.5 displays the regression slopes across specified age range of SAP participants. Although an interaction was observed, the strength of the interaction was not significant. This means that the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout was not affected by age range.
Job level differences. Are there any job level/rank demographic differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? Hypothesis 3c was tested using sequential multiple regression via SPSS 25.0. The sequential multiple regression specified current job title as the control variable, impostorism as the predictor variable, and burnout as the dependent variable. Only the 740 SAP participants who responded to the question were used in this analysis, $N = 740$. Findings revealed that job title did not affect the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout; Model 1, $F_{\text{change}} (1,738) = 7.508$, $p\text{-change} = .006$; Model 2, $F_{\text{change}} (1,737) = 60.852$, $p\text{-change} = < .001$. As shown in Table 4.13, no job title differences were found among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout.
Table 4.13

Sequential Regression Model Coefficients Using Job Level as a Control Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R Square Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>df1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.005a</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>1.048</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Model 1 Predictors: (Constant), Current Title?
b Model 2 Predictors: (Constant), age identity, CIPS Total
c Dependent Variable: Burnout

Figure 4.6 displays the regression slopes across specified titles of SAP participants. Although an interaction is observed, the strength of the interaction was not significant. This means that the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout is not affected by current title.

![Figure 4.6](image_url)

*Figure 4.6. Regression model displaying the slope of the regression lines for job title.*
**Time working in higher education differences.** Are there any working years in higher education setting differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? Hypothesis 3d was tested using sequential multiple regression via SPSS 25.0. The sequential multiple regression specified length of time worked in higher education (LTWHE) as the control variable, impostorism as the predictor variable, and burnout as the dependent variable. Only SAP participants who responded to the question were used in this analysis. $N = 741$. Findings revealed that LTWHE does not affect the relationship between impostorism and burnout; Model 1, $R = .070$, $F_{\text{change}}(1,739) = 3.685$, $p_{\text{change}} = .055$; Model 2, $R = .295$, $F_{\text{change}}(1,738) = 66.120$, $p_{\text{change}} = < .001$. As shown in Table 4.14, no length of time worked in higher education differences were found among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout.

Table 4.14

*Sequential Regression Model Coefficients using LTWHE as a Control Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2$ Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.070a</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>1.043</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.295</td>
<td>0.871</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Model 1 Predictors: (Constant), LTWHE
b Model 2 Predictors: (Constant), age identity, CIPS Total
c Dependent Variable: Burnout

Figure 4.7 displays the regression slopes across specified LTWHE of SAP participants. Although an interaction was observed, the strength of the interaction was not significant. This means that the relationship between impostor phenomenon and burnout was not affected by LTWHE.
Figure 4.7. Regression model displaying the slope of the regression lines for length of time SAPs worked in higher education.

**Time in current role differences.** Are there any length of time in current role differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? Hypothesis 3e was tested using sequential multiple regression via SPSS 25.0. The sequential multiple regression specified length of time in current role (LTCR) as the control variable, impostorism as the predictor variable, and burnout as the dependent variable. Only SAP participants who responded to the question were used in this analysis. $N = 742$. Findings revealed that LTCR did not affect the relationship between impostorism and burnout; Model 1, $R = .068$, $F_{change} (1,740) = 3.482$, $p_{change} = .062$; Model 2, $R = .292$, $F_{change} (1,739) = 65.212$, $p_{change} = < .001$. As shown in Table 4.15, no differences in length of time in current role were found among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout.
Table 4.15

**Sequential Regression Model Coefficients Using LTCR as a Control Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.068a</td>
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<td>0.003</td>
<td>1.045</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.482</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.292</td>
<td>0.850</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.081</td>
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<td>65.212</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Model 1 Predictors: (Constant), LTCR  
b Model 2 Predictors: (Constant), age identity, CIPS Total  
c Dependent Variable: Burnout

Figure 4.8 displays the regression slopes across specified LTCRs of SAP participants. Although an interaction was observed, the strength of the interaction was not significant. This means that the relationship between impostorism and burnout was not significantly affected by LTCR.

**Figure 4.8.** Regression model displaying the slope of the regression lines for length of time worked in current role.
Summary of Results

This online survey study was open for 1 week and yielded a total sample of 762 respondents. After data screening, 742 respondents were used to test the three hypotheses. A majority of the respondents self-identified as White (N=520, 70.1%), female (N=555, 74.8%), and had earned a master’s degree (N=513, 69.1%). Almost half (49%) of the online sample ranged in age from 25-34 years with the most popular being the 25-29 age group (31%), followed by the 30-34 age group (18%). Furthermore, respondents were relatively new to the field having worked 0-4 years (N=281, 37.9%) or 5-9 years (181, 24.4%), and considered themselves in an entry level position (N=236, 31.8%) or mid-level manager position (N=283, 38.1%). A large majority worked at a 4-year institution (N=591, 79.6%)

The preliminary assumptions of normality were met for both the CIPS and burnout measures and strong reliability evidence was achieved for the CIPS. The CIPS mean score was 64.58 on a scale that ranged from 20-100, indicating that they frequently experienced characteristics of impostorism. The single-item burnout mean score was 2.99 on a scale ranging from 1-5, indicating a moderate level of burnout for these student affairs professionals.

The linear regression analyses revealed that (a) impostorism was indeed prevalent among this sample of student affairs professionals; the sample reported having frequent feelings of impostorism; and (b) a small yet significant positive relationship existed between the impostor phenomenon and burnout scores among student affairs professionals. The sequential multiple regressions revealed no significant demographic differences were revealed when examining the predictive relationship between
impostorism (predictor) and burnout (outcome) among these student affairs professionals. While a positive interaction was observed in the regression slopes of each demographic characteristic, the strength of the interaction was not significant.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the empirical findings of the online survey study as well as the implications for student affairs professionals across the United States. This chapter is outlined in the following manner: (a) implications of findings, (b) limitations, (c) recommendations, and (d) conclusion.

Introduction

Student affairs professionals continue to be susceptible to burnout due to the nature of their job; the addition of other responsibilities and campus challenges; and combating many emotionally distressful situations every day (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Burnout has been shown to limit the performance of student affairs professionals, foster a hostile work environment, and lead to increased attrition (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Marshall et al., 2016; Mullen et al., 2018) Burnout has also been associated with poor self-care, attrition, declining customer service, irritability, and depression. (Marshall et al., 2016). Impostorism is another psychological variable that may predict or coexist with burnout among frontline, helping professionals (Hutchins, 2015; Leach et al., 2019; Legassie et al., 2008; Parkman, 2016; Vaughn et al., 2019). Given that impostors tend to seek perfection from themselves and strive to minimize mistakes and failures by working harder and longer hours (Clance, 1985; Parkman, 2016), helping-professionals with these distressing thoughts and feelings may also exhibit more stress and burnout. While there have been studies to examine the effects of impostorism on other topics such as parenting styles (Li et al., 2014), perfectionism (Dudau, 2014), self-esteem (Garwick et al., 2011),
impact on specific groups of people (Cokley et al., 2013; Vaughn et al., 2019), and
narcissists (Kaufman et al., 2018), no studies have focused specifically on the effects on
student affairs professionals.

The predictive relationship between impostorism and burnout was recently
examined in higher education and medicine (Hutchins, 2015; Leach et al., 2019; Legassie
et al., 2008). Hutchins (2015) examined the link between impostorism and emotional
exhaustion among higher education faculty and found a "strong positive and significant
relationship among impostor thoughts and emotional exhaustion” (p. 6) in the faculty.
This was not consistent with the current study as a positive relationship was found, but it
was only slightly significant.

Leach et al. (2019) recently found some evidence supporting the link between
impostorism and burnout in another helping profession – medical professionals. This is
consistent with this study as a positive relationship was found with this sample as well.
Despite a few empirical studies in this area (Hutchins, 2015) and higher education in
general (Vaughn et al., 2019), this study attempted to fill in the gap in the literature by
studying the potential link between impostorism and burnout in student affairs
professionals. This study partially replicated the impostorism-burnout studies conducted
on medical professionals (Leach et al., 2019; Legassie et al., 2008; Villwock et al., 2016).
Student affairs professionals, like medical professionals, may experience similar
compassion fatigue due to the nature of their work and the demands of the work
environment. To date, no previous studies have examined the impostorism-burnout link
among student affairs professionals. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure
 impostorism and burnout in a cross section of U.S. student affairs professionals to fill the gap in the literature.

After utilizing both convenience and snowball sampling, this online survey was launched in February 2020 and was available to U.S. student affairs professionals for 1 week. While a total sample of 762 respondents submitted the survey, 742 respondents were used to test the three hypotheses. The most frequent demographics of the respondents were as follows: worked at a 4-year institution (79.6%), age range from 25-34 (49%), White (70.1%), female (74.8%) held a master’s degree (69.1%), worked 0-4 years (37.9%), considered themselves as entry level (31.8%) or mid-level manager position (38.1%). The frequent demographics of the survey mirror those of student affairs professionals in the US (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). The majority of the respondents were in entry- or mid-level positions consistent with colleges, as the number of senior-level positions available are limited.

The survey was completed by 742 participants in only 1 week, indicating that this is a topic of interest to many student affairs professionals. Based on the speed of submission and e-mails and personal communications on social media, it appeared that student affairs professionals were interested in participating in the survey. In fact, many participants provided frequent positive feedback in the form of comments on the Facebook post soliciting participants. It indicates the study has value in the field and is worthy of future research. In addition, the survey was conducted during a typically slower season for student affairs professionals which could have made it easier for them to find time to participate. Had it been distributed during a busier work season or during the time when colleges were forced to transition to distance learning due to the Covid-19
pandemic, scores may have been different, and participants may have been overwhelmed and not had the time to participate. Some demographic information missing from this study includes size of institution, location of institution, and if the institution was public/private or for-/not for-profit.

RQ1 asked: How prevalent is impostorism and burnout among U.S. student affairs professionals? Based on this survey data, Hypothesis 1 was supported; both impostorism and burnout were prevalent among these student affairs professionals. As expected, the 742 online respondents self-reported that they frequently experience characteristics of impostorism and moderate levels of burnout. Clance (1985) does not quantify how many feelings would be considered frequent but could be interpreted as often, as indicated by a score of 4 out of 5 on the Likert scale of the CIPS. Moderate level of burnout means that most indicated “I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, e.g., emotional exhaustion.” This empirical finding is consistent with Hutchins (2015) who revealed that tenured and untenured college faculty reported moderate and intense levels of impostorism respectively, and faculty impostorism scores were positively related to emotional exhaustion scores. It is also consistent with the mean score ($M = 66.84$) found by Vaughn et al. (2019), and the mean score ($M = 61.2$) measured by Legassie et al. (2008).

The study found student affairs professionals to exhibit frequent feelings of impostorism and a moderate level of burnout. Knowing the prevalence of impostorism and intensity of burnout in the field can help to shape future graduate programs to prepare the next cohort of SAPs (Burke, Dye, & Hughey, 2016). Understanding what it means to be an impostor or to work with/for one, in addition to recognizing the potential for
burnout in the field, can assist in the development of relevant professional development opportunities for professional staff (Mullen et al., 2018). Furthermore, awareness of these traits and typical behaviors of individuals exhibiting feelings of impostorism or burnout, can assist individuals, and supervisors can aid in taking preventative measures to ensure symptoms do not increase and ultimately contribute to attrition in the field (Gooblar, 2018; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Tull, 2006).

RQ2 asked: What is the predictive relationship between impostorism (predictor) and burnout (outcome) among U.S. student affairs professionals? “The demands and expectations placed on student affairs professionals can lead to stress, burnout, a lack of work-life balance, and decreased job satisfaction” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 1). Hypothesis 2 was supported. As expected, both impostorism and burnout increase in the same direction \[ R (1,740) = .292, p < .001; .019, r\text{-squared} = .085 \]. An \( r\text{-square} \) value revealed that 8.5% of the variance in burnout was due to their impostorism scores. This data suggest that impostorism may be a small, yet significant, predictor of burnout among student affairs professionals and is consistent with other studies (Leach et al., 2019; Villwock et al., 2016). This finding provides some initial support to the impostorism-burnout relationship in student affairs professionals and is consistent with previous research on medical professionals. Feelings of impostorism over a prolonged period of time can also contribute to burnout (Churchill, 2019). Methodological limitations, such as sample size, can account for impostorism being only a small predictor of burnout. Additional research is recommended to see if a larger sample size yields a stronger relationship.

RQ3 asked: Are there any demographic differences among student affairs professionals experiencing impostorism and burnout? Hypothesis 3 was not supported.
Despite other studies finding demographic differences in gender (Badawy et al., 2018; Villwock et al., 2016) and race (Cokley et al., 2013), no significant demographic differences were revealed when examining the predictive relationship between impostorism (predictor) and burnout (outcome) among these student affairs professionals. However, this is consistent with findings from Leach et al. (2019). While a positive interaction was observed in the regression slopes of each demographic characteristic, the strength of the interaction was not significant. A methodological limitation of the study is that the survey was only open for 1 week and while it had a solid response rate of 742 participants, the individual demographic categories may not have had adequate numbers to make an impact.

**Implications of Findings**

“At its core, student affairs is the work of helping each and every student get the most out of his or her unique college experience” (Coomes & Gerda, 2016, p. 3). Higher education is constantly changing and as a result, the field of student affairs is always evolving (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). As a result, it is essential to also transform the way education, training, and professional development play in the role of the student affairs professional. “The profession . . . should periodically review the foundations of the profession and explicitly add additional building blocks as new knowledge and insights become available” (Sandeen & Barr, 2006, p. 25). This foundation should support the work of the profession.

Prolonged feelings of impostorism can foster emotional exhaustion and subsequently burnout in an individual (Churchill, 2019). At work, impostorism can prevent individuals from reaching their full potential because they might not apply for
positions they do not think they are ready for it even though they are more than qualified, according to standards.

Churchill (2019) recommended impostors evaluate workload and habits, be mindful and experiment with safe-to-fail projects which have small consequences if they do not go as intended. Clance (1988) recommends talking out feelings of impostorism and has found group therapy to be best in overcoming the feelings. Self-awareness is key to conquering impostorism and can also help prevent burnout. If an individual can recognize the signs early enough, they can help themselves or seek help before it is too late.

Compassion fatigue is linked to burnout as they both consist of similar symptoms. Current graduate programs do not equip student affairs professionals with the tools to handle the effects of empathetic relationships and emotional pain that may come about when working with students (Maslach, 1998; Raimondi, 2019). Campuses should encourage professional development for staff to gain skills on how to cope with any distress that may present itself in this human services role. Supervisors should also receive training on how to identify and work with impostors. It is also important for supervisors to recognize burnout, both in themselves and their staff, by being present and leading by example with a healthy work-life balance to promote positive mental health at the workplace, foster a pleasant work environment, and ultimately, be able to prevent attrition. It is also important for a supervisor to understand the fit of the individual in the department, as a misalignment in goals and expectations can also lead to burnout. Frequent feelings of impostorism and moderate levels of burnout can escalate in an individual with the addition of new job responsibilities, a new role, or other change or
new stressor in the workplace. It is important that these feelings do not become intense
to the point where the individual’s mental health is affected, or they decide they have had
enough and want to leave.

Limitations

The present study had a number of limitations. Upon reflection, using a single
item to measure burnout, although validated by other studies (Dolan et al., 2014; West et
al., 2009), was a limitation. A more accurate result could have been attained by having
participants complete the entire Maslach Burnout Inventory. The full assessment could
have provided a more thorough examination of all three dimensions of burnout and how
they relate to impostor phenomenon.

The demographic questionnaire failed to ask participants more information about
their institution including its size, location, and if it was public/private or for-/not for-
profit. In addition, it would have been interesting to ask if respondents had an intent to
quit either their current job or if they were considering leaving the field altogether, and
also to see to what degree impostorism and burnout lead to an individual walking away
from student affairs.

Timing was limited in this study. The researcher only had the survey open for 1
week. While there was an active push for participants, there was only a one-time request
sent out without additional follow up to recruit additional individuals. In addition,
sample size was limited to a convenience sample of SAPs the researcher had access to
through colleagues, social media platforms, and professional organization membership.
It is possible that if the survey was administered over a longer period of time, additional
individuals could have responded. This could have increased the size of pool of each
characteristic and therefore the significance found by the sequential multiple regression analysis. The study had adequate statistical power with a sample size of 742, however, in terms of demographic characteristics, unequal cell sizes should be noted. Due to recruitment style consisting of convenience and snowball recruitment, we cannot be certain of the response rate.

The season in which the survey was distributed could have also been a factor. The survey was conducted at the end of February when most student affairs professionals are not necessarily in their busy season. Had the survey been distributed at the beginning of the academic year, during August/September, or during the end of year activities in late April/May, different results may have been recorded for burnout. Furthermore, there may have been fewer participants as SAPs may have been too busy to respond to the survey or the request could have gotten lost in the shuffle of more pertinent things they had to address.

In an effort to maintain complete anonymity in the study, no identifying factors were recorded, therefore, there was no way to control if individuals participated more than once. The questions of the CIPS were meant to be answered as quickly as possible. Participants were encouraged to select the first response that entered their mind rather than overthinking as dwelling on a response could have affected their overall score. Upon looking at the time taken by participants to complete the survey, some took substantially longer to finish potentially affecting the score they achieved on the CIPS because they overthought their responses.
Recommendations

Several recommendations for future studies regarding impostor phenomenon and burnout in student affairs professionals to consider are:

1. Futures studies should replicate this study and allow for more data collection time. Keep the survey open so that a larger sample size can be recruited.

2. Collect data during various times of the academic year to see if certain seasons of heavy workloads affect scores.

3. Conduct a longitudinal study to see if results change over time. This could be done as individuals enter and complete a graduate program in higher education or as they progress in their career.

4. Target specific subgroups of student affairs professionals in larger numbers.

5. Measure burnout using the full Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) instead of a single-item measure of burnout. Having participants complete the full assessment may result in a more accurate conclusion regarding burnout and can determine which dimension of burnout specifically relates to impostorism.

6. Conduct a mixed methods study where participants are interviewed by the researcher about their experience in addition to answering the survey questions from this study. This can help develop a narrative regarding the responses and may help in better explaining the connection.

7. Examine the effects of impostorism and burnout on the intent to leave or conduct the study on only those who no longer work in student affairs to determine if burnout and/or impostorism were potential causes to their departure from the field.
Conclusion

Overall, the current study added to the limited research exploring impostor phenomenon and burnout in student affairs professionals. The study attempted to find the prevalence of impostorism among student affairs professionals, if a relationship exists between impostorism and burnout in SAPs, and how demographic characteristics may contribute to impostor phenomenon and burnout in student affairs professionals. The study found that SAPs suffer from frequent feelings of impostorism; a slightly significant relationship was found between impostor phenomenon and burnout; and that a positive, but not significant, interaction was observed in the regression slopes of each demographic characteristic. Impostor phenomenon can be minimized and burnout can be prevented through support and self-care. Student affairs professionals can overcome feelings of impostorism and set themselves up to avoid burnout in the workplace. Graduate programs, employee support, and professional development have the ability to help SAPs avoid burnout exacerbated by impostorism
References

ACPA (2018). Who we are. Retrieved from myacpa.org website: https://www.myacpa.org/who-we-are


Appendix A

IRB Approval from St. John Fisher College

February 20, 2020

File No: 4076-02202020-05

Maria Patostas
St. John Fisher College

Dear Ms. Patostas:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Exempt Review project, “A Descriptive Profile of Imposter Phenomenon and Burnout in Student Affairs Professionals”.

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at elb@sjfc.edu

Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta

Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
ELB@sjfc.edu
2/14/20
Christian Calienes, PhD
HRPP Coordinator
Kingsborough Community College

To whom it may concern,

My name is Christian Calienes and I am the HRPP coordinator at Kingsborough Community College. I am writing to inform you that Maria Pateras has full permission to collect data at Kingsborough Community College for the project entitled “A Descriptive Profile of Inspector Phantom and Burnout in Student Affairs Professionals.” This includes conducting surveys of Student Affairs professionals during the Spring and Summer 2020 semesters.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Christian Calienes

HRPP Coordinator, Kingsborough Community College
calienes@kbcc.cuny.edu
718-368-5844
Appendix B

Recruitment Communication – Flyer & Facebook Post

SEEKING PARTICIPANTS
FOR A RESEARCH STUDY EXPLORING
BURNOUT AND
IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON IN
STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA:
• Currently employed full-time, part-time or as a graduate assistant at
  an institution of higher education in the field of student affairs
• At least 18 years of age

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:
To see if a relationship exists between burnout and Impostor
Phenomenon in student affairs professionals

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:
I am hoping the study results will provide insight to student affairs
leaders as they design strategies for staff retention and support.

The survey takes approximately 5-8 minutes to complete. I greatly
appreciate your contribution and thank you in advance for your time!

Feel free to forward to any others that qualify!

https://tinyurl.com/SABurnout

Maria Patentes - mp04330@sjfc.edu
Doctoral Candidate, St. John Fisher College, Ed.D in Executive Leadership
Appendix C

Data Collection Instrument

A Study on Impostor Phenomenon and Burnout in Student Affairs Professionals
Patestas Survey Tool FINAL

1. STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

DETAILED STUDY INFORMATION:
You are being asked to be in a research study of Impostor Phenomenon and burnout among student affairs professionals. This study is being conducted as an online survey via Qualtrics. This study is being conducted by: Maria Patestas, a doctoral candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Byron Hargrove and Dr. Judy Wolfe in the Education Doctorate in Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College.

You were selected as a possible participant because you have been identified as a student affairs professional currently employed in student affairs, either full-time, part-time, or as a graduate assistant.

Please read this consent form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

PROCEDURES:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:
After providing consent on the online survey tool, you will be asked to affirm you are currently employed as a student affairs professional. You will then be asked to answer eight demographic questions followed by 20 questions from the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and one question on burnout. The entire survey should take no longer than 5-8 minutes. No additional commitment is expected of you after completion of the survey.

COMPENSATION/INCENTIVES:
You will not receive compensation/incentive.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The records of this study will be kept private and your confidentiality will be protected. In any sort of report the researcher might publish, no identifying information will be included. IP addresses will not be collected by the survey tool.

Identifiable research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office and on a password-protected laptop by the investigator. All study records with
identifiable information, including approved IRB documents, tapes, transcripts, and consent forms, will be destroyed by shredding and/or deleting after 3 years.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:
Participation in this study is voluntary and requires your informed consent. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. John Fisher College. If you decide to participate, you are free to skip any question that is asked. You may also withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

CONTACTS, REFERRALS AND QUESTIONS:
The researcher conducting this study is Maria Patestas. If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at mp04330@sjfc.edu or 516-445-4143 or the faculty supervisor, Dr. Byron Hargrove, Professor/Director Honors Program, Berkeley College, at BKH@berkeleycollege.edu.

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact the SJFC IRB administrator by phone during normal business hours at (585) 385-8012 or irb@sjfc.edu.

Should any participant feel the study has caused physical or emotional distress, you are encouraged to seek out an appropriate provider. If you are an SJFC student, contact the SJFC Health and Wellness Center (585-385-8280), all others are encouraged to reach out to your respective healthcare provider or an appropriate agency.

Clicking on the “Agree” button below indicates that:
- I have read the above information.
- I voluntarily agree to participate.
- I am at least 18 years of age.

If you do not wish to participate in the study, please decline participation by clicking on the “Disagree” button below.”
  a. Agree
  b. Disagree

2. Are you currently working as a student affairs professional either full-time, part-time, or as a graduate assistant?

*Department and program areas typically associated with student affairs include residence life, commuter services, graduate student services, admissions, new student orientation, financial aid, counseling centers, advising centers, leadership development, Greek affairs, student activities, student unions, leadership development, community service, service learning, career planning and placement, discipline and judicial affairs, alumni relations and development, services for students with disabilities, developmental learning services, and advocacy and support programs (e.g., for students of color, lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender students, veterans, women, international students, adults).
  a. Yes
  b. No
3. Which best describes your gender identity?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Gender non-conforming
   d. Other
   e. Prefer not to say

4. Select your age range:
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-29
   c. 30-34
   d. 35-39
   e. 40-44
   f. 45-49
   g. 50-59
   h. 60+

5. How do you describe your racial/ethnic identity?
   a. White
   b. Black
   c. Latinx or Hispanic
   d. Asian
   e. Native American
   f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   g. Two or More
   h. Other/Unknown
   i. Prefer not to say

6. Select your highest level of education:
   a. High School Diploma or equivalent
   b. Associate’s Degree
   c. Bachelor’s Degree
   d. Master’s Degree
   e. Doctorate/other terminal degree

7. How long have you worked in higher education?
   a. 0-4 years
   b. 5-9 years
   c. 10-14 years
   d. 15-19 years
   e. 20-24 years
   f. 25+ years

8. I currently work at a:
   a. Community College (2-year institution)
   b. Undergraduate College (4-year institution)
   c. Graduate School
d. Other

9. Please select the category that describes your current job title
   a. Graduate Assistant
   b. Entry Level
   c. Mid-Level Manager
   d. Senior Management
   e. Other

10. How long have you worked in your current role?
   a. 0-4 years
   b. 5-9 years
   c. 10-14 years
   d. 15-19 years
   e. 20-24 years
   f. 25+ years

CIPS-
For each question, please select the response that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.


11. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

12. I can give the impression that I’m more competent than I really am.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

13. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true
14. When people praise me for something I’ve accomplished, I’m afraid I won’t be able to
live up to their expectations of me in the future.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

15. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because
I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

16. I’m afraid people important to me may find out that I’m not as capable as they think I
am.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

17. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those
times I have done my best.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

18. I rarely do a project or task as well as I’d like to do it.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

19. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of
some kind of error.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true
20. It’s hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

21. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

22. I’m disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

23. Sometimes I’m afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

24. I’m often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

25. When I’ve succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

26. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I’ve accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I’ve done.
27. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

28. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

29. If I’m going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

30. I feel bad and discouraged if I’m not “the best” or at least “very special” in situations that involve achievement.
   a. Not at all true
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Very true

BURNOUT
31. Overall, based on your definition of burnout, how would you rate your level of burnout?
   a. “I enjoy my work, I have no symptoms of burnout”
   b. “Occasionally I am under stress, and I don’t always have as much energy as I once did, but I don’t feel burnt out”
   c. “I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, such as physical and emotional exhaustion”
   d. “The symptoms of burnout that I’m experiencing won’t go away. I think about frustration at work a lot”
e. “I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help”
Appendix D

Permission to Use the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale

Dear Maria,

I work with and am replying to your Impostor Phenomenon (IP) request on behalf of Dr. Clance. You have permission to use and make copies of the scale, *Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)*, and I have attached it along with the scoring.

**Also please read the permission form, included with the scale, and reply with your consent.** We would greatly appreciate receiving a copy of your dissertation for our records and will include the citation on the IP Reference List. Thank you.

Given you are using the CIPS, please use the terminology/title "Impostor Phenomenon" rather than imposter syndrome. See explanation below.

FYI:

Given the official title of the scale (CIPS: Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale) includes the words "Impostor Phenomenon," (IP) Dr. Clance suggests that researchers use that specific terminology (e.g., Impostor Phenomenon) rather than using "Imposter Syndrome," as that terminology (e.g., syndrome) refers to an official medical diagnosis, of which the IP is not [Kaplan, K. (May 20, 2009). Unmasking the impostor, *Nature*, 459, p. 2].

The preferred spelling is "Impostor" - with an "o" at the end rather than an "e."

Also, sometimes the word "syndrome" is seen in the social media rather than the word "phenomenon" - and use of the word "phenomenon" is the correct term to use when referencing the CIPS (Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale) or Dr. Clance's work.

I have further included an IP Reference list (not all inclusive) for your use and/or to make available for participants if they want to know more about the IP and you could refer them to Dr. Clance's website: <http://www.paulineroseclance.com> There may be some IP studies on the list that include burnout that you may want to look at.

FYI:

**NEW RELEASE** I have re-released my original 1985 *The Impostor Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear That Haunts Your Success* book on Amazon Kindle for download to Reader: https://www.amazon.com/Impostor-Phenomenon-Overcoming-Haunts-
Success-ebook/dp/B074D3NDGQ/ref=sr_1_1?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1501621649&sr=1-1&keywords=the+impostor+phenomenon

There has been significant world-wide research and social media interest on the Impostor Phenomenon (IP), along with practical application of the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) since their inception in 1985.

The original book offers an in-depth background on the author’s foundational conceptions of the IP, along with the IP Cycle, IP Profile, and exercises for those prone to experiencing IP feelings. Other IP articles by Dr. Clance may be viewed on her website: http://www.paulineroseclance.com/index.html

Requests for an updated Reference List on IP research and citations may be sent to Dr. Clance @ drpaulinerose@comcast.net

The book, inclusive of the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale, is copyrighted, so research/professional use and reproduction of the scale still requires permission by Dr. Clance: http://www.paulineroseclance.com/impostor_phenomenon.html

If you plan on submitting your research for publication, please first write again for permission conditions of the CIPS. Here are some criteria:

In regard to including the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) itself in a (journal) publication, permission is not given. There have been mixed legal issues with journal publishers who sometimes consider the CIPS as their property to freely disseminate when it is included in a publication, which does not protect Dr. Clance's copyright, required permissions by her to reproduce, and does not allow for reliable tracking/documentation of CIPS research/use. Dr. Clance does not charge for use of the scale to better enable persons to do research with publication without legal/financial complications. Many researchers use copyrighted scales for research and publish results, yet only properly cite a scale without including it, in its entirety, in a publication. Dr. Clance is highly supportive for persons to publish their results (we hope it works out for you!) in reputable, accredited journals. If you do publish, please send us the citation and a copy of the work/link for our records. The proper citation for the CIPS is as follows:


Some authors have alternatively chosen to include an approved link to the CIPS from Dr. Clance's website in the Citations area of their work, which would also include the above original source citation, for which permission is given: Dr. Clance's website http://paulineroseclance.com and/or IP webpage (http://paulineroseclance.com/impostor_phenomenon.html - do not include CIPS PDF link directly).
Thank you for your interest in the Impostor Phenomenon and we wish you well with your work!

Sincerely,

Andra

Andra Gailis, M.S., NCC  
Professional Counselor  
725 Wood Valley Trace  
Roswell, GA 30076  
puda67@hotmail.com