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## LIVING AS AN IMPOSTOR: AN EXPLORATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AMONG MULTIRACIAL YOUTH IN SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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LIVING AS AN IMPOSTOR:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AMONG  
MULTIRACIAL YOUTH IN SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Community and Leadership  
Development in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the University of  
Kentucky

By  
Juliana Danielle Markham  
Lexington, Kentucky  
Director: Dr. Stacy Vincent, Associate Professor of Agricultural Education  
Lexington, Kentucky  
2021

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

LIVING AS AN IMPOSTOR:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF  
MULTIRACIAL YOUTH IN SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

The racial demographic of the United States is ever changing, and the increase of multiracial children is substantial. This multiple-case study examined the lived experiences of multiracial youth in secondary agricultural education. This study finds evidence of Impostor Phenomenon among these multiracial students in regard to their races. This study provides insight to advise other educational institutions and organizations on how these multiracial students perceive and are perceived, within agricultural education, how it affects them, and gives recommendations to improve the future experiences of multiracial students within agricultural education.

KEYWORDS: Multiracial, Agricultural Education, Impostor Phenomenon, FFA, Identity

Juliana Danielle Markham

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*(Name of Student)*

04/14/2021

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Date

LIVING AS AN IMPOSTOR:  
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MULTIRACIAL YOUTH IN SECONDARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When I am not, *He is*. “And Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Egypt? And He said, Certainly I will be with thee: and this shall be a token unto thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.”

Exodus 3:11-12

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First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Stacy Vincent. I am so grateful for your guidance and constant provision of opportunities for growth in my academics and personal life. You have enhanced my understanding of writing and research that I will use for the rest of my career. Your belief in my abilities, practical suggestions, and willingness to provide everything that I needed of you has been instrumental. Thank you for your thought-provoking conversations and fueling my spark of interest that blazed into what you are reading today. There are no words to describe my debt to you for pushing me to discover more about myself than I would have ever thought to look for otherwise.

To the rest of my committee, I would like to thank Dr. Kenneth Jones and Dr. Mia Farrell. Your interest in my thesis and willingness to participate is ever appreciated. I am so thankful for the conversations we have had and the time you have contributed to me and my success. This achievement would not have been completed without you.

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To my husband Austin, I find it difficult to find the words that express my full appreciation in a way that encompasses everything that it needs to. You are my most enthusiastic cheerleader and encourager; you believe in me when I don't even believe in myself. Your commitment to our relationship and our marriage, even states apart, has been invaluable. Your love and support keep me grounded, and without it I would be lost. I am so grateful to you, not just because of how much you have given up to make my education a priority, but because you have seen me through the ups and the downs of this entire journey and have kept me afloat when I felt like my head was barely above water. You have shared this entire process with me over the last two years, and it only seems right that I dedicate this to you.

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networking that provided me with this opportunity and much needed words of encouragement that allowed me to persist.

Finally, I would like to thank God and his perfect plan that led me here. Without my faith I would have quit long ago. I have found that reliance upon myself and others does not work, but that I can *always* rely on my Savior. Casting Crowns said it best, “Not because of who I am, but because of what You've done. Not because of what I've done, but because of who You are.”

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census (2018), the United States is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before. Naturally, with more diversity in a population, a correlation occurs of intermarriage between races, ethnicities, and cultures. In 2013, one-in-ten babies born were identified as biracial - an increase of ten-times the count in 1970 (Parker et al., 2019).

Some people refer to being biracial, or multiracial, as being "mixed". This is due to the "mixing" of the two different races of the parents; thus having a "mixed" child. Root (1992) uses the term *multiracial* in reference to people who identify with two or more racial heritages, based upon socially constructed racial criteria. Another scholar believes it to be individuals who have biological parents who identify with different single-race groups or at least one parent who identifies multiracially (Harris, 2002). Thus, we will predominantly use multiracial through this study, although biracial may be used as well.

Forty-six percent of the current multiracial population is under the age of 18 (Parker et al., 2019). Despite this, limited literature exists on multiracials in education, and even less literature regarding multiracial youth in education. Biracial adolescents were discussed by Millville et al. (2005) to experience racism and pressure to identify with a specific racial group, usually their parent of color, along with continuing curiosity and exploration about issues of race and culture. Social acceptability of multiracial heritage provided them with important messages of whether "being and looking different" was accepted or not. Being raised on a military base was given as one of the examples of social acceptability in which there were a variety of cultures present, and it was socially acceptable to be of multiple races.

When it came to how multiracial individuals identified themselves, a study by Phinney & Alipuria (1996) revealed that most multiethnic participants at the college level used a monoethnic self-label, meaning that they identified as a single race/ethnicity. When it came to whether they used a White or a minority label, it varied based on the racial composition of the school they attended. Interestingly enough, those individuals associated with higher status groups, within social backgrounds, are more likely to claim biracial identity than those associated with lower status groups (Townsend et al., 2012). The participants attending a college with a higher percentage of minority students tended to use a minority monoethnic label. A White monoethnic label was least frequently used, although half of the adolescents attending a campus that was majority White, used a White monoethnic label, showing signs of assimilation (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996).

A lot of the literature on assimilation has varying degrees of definitions, but according to Wallendorf & Reilly (1983), full assimilation is said to have occurred “when the impact of the norms associated with the culture of origin becomes very small, at which point the person has effectively become a member of the culture of residence”. Simons (1901) suggests that assimilation involves movement from one cultural group to another. Unfortunately, this can mean the disappearance of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural expression of it through cultural and social differences (Alba & Nee, 1997). Impacted by various forces, sequences of succeeding generations of diverse immigrant groups from underprivileged backgrounds are expected to eventually abandon their old ways and “melt’ into the mainstream (Zhou, 1997). One was considered fully assimilated when they had given up their cultural identity, lost distinctive characteristics, and no longer differed significantly from European Americans (Gordon, 1964).

Some of the literature benchmarks intermarriage as part of assimilation (Rumbaut, 1997; Waters & Jiménez, 2005). When immigrants of various other races intermarry, the product is children of multiracial heritage. Rumbaut (1997) suggested that intermarriage further dilutes ethnicity and that these children want to be more American than *Americans*. Children of immigrants specifically are generally eager to be indistinguishable from their American peers by embracing American culture and acquiring an American identity (Zhou, 1997). These mixed-race individuals often acquire a marginal status that gives them a modicum of privilege and respect. Although, they are never fully accepted by either the dominant group or their ethnic community (Alba & Nee, 1997). On the other hand, some individuals feel torn because “acting White” is regarded as disloyalty to one’s group (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

As stated previously, multiracial individuals have parents of two or more different racial backgrounds. That being said, mixed-race individuals typically don’t have parents with an identical racial background as them, and thus face the difficulty of finding racially similar role models (Townsend et al., 2009). “In looking for images of oneself or one’s group, and not finding them, individuals may feel that their racial identities are being ignored or are invisible in the larger culture” (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008). A lot of the literature connects and/or shows that identity and self-esteem go hand in hand. The strength of attachment that a child feels to the parent and the parents’ national origins critically affects how youth think and feel about themselves (Rumbaut, 1994). He found that:

“Children who feel embarrassed by their parents are significantly more likely to identify assimilatively as unhyphenated Americans, whereas higher-status professional parents are more likely to influence their children to identify by their national origin. Parent-child conflict emerged as the strongest determinant of poorer self-esteem and depressive effect” (p. 168).

There is also very little literature on the importance parental influence in the development of a multiracial identity of an individual (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). Multiracial research has been focused on individual identity development with little attention to parent-child relationships (Laszloffy, 2005). Multiracial families are unique in the fact that monoracial parents are tasked with teaching their multiracial children what it means to be multiracial (Stone, 2009). These multiracial children may bring awareness and provoke reflections on racial socializations for interracial parents (Root, 2001: Rosenblatt et al., 1995). Rockquemore et al. (2006) suggests racial socialization is complicated by many factors, especially the difference in racial experiences and identities of the monoracial parents. The portrayal of these different experiences to the multiracial children by the monoracial parents has not been researched. Essentially, one of the biggest challenges for the children of interracial parents is that they lack a specific family member who can totally understand their racial identity (Rockquemore et al., 2006).

Bracey et al. (2003) found that biracial adolescents had higher levels of ethnic identity than White monoracials (but lower than their other monoracial peers). This is possibly because of the complexity of the developmental identity of biracials, which leads to greater exploration of ethnic identities compared to that of Whites.

When it comes to education, the literature on the dynamic of multiracial individuals is somewhat limited, although the literature on these individuals is more extensive in education than other areas. While the literature is not vast, there is being more research conducted on them now more than ever with its increase in popularity.

In a study done by Williams (2011), it was found that Black-White biracial students had various and common experiences in school. It seemed to be that their teachers were

unaware of them and their heritages. While the teachers knew that the students were biracial, they would identify them as being monoracial, specifically black, with no regard as to what the student wanted to be identified as. These students were also told to "pick one" on demographic information needed during the year, and were mainly led to pick their minority race when asking what they should choose. Renn (2009) also notes the recurring situations in which students of multiple races and ethnicities are forced to "choose only one" on data collections through the federal government, in which they are not given the right to self-identify. The option to choose a biracial option is fairly new, and was not available at the time. Johnston & Nadal (2010) infer that the message conveyed to these multiracial individuals, is that "being monoracial is the norm or ideal, and that being multiracial is substandard or different." They go on to state "the existing literature on multiracial people tends to focus on identity and inner struggles in "choosing between their multiple racial backgrounds (e.g. Poston, 1990) instead of examining race related experiences within a monoracially-designed society" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

Millville et al. (2005) found that their participants had to deal with multiple encounters of "monoracial racism". One participant recounted an incident of discrimination where a job application with their Asian surname was denied twice, yet when they inquired about the job in person, they were immediately asked when they could start. Other participants experienced getting "1000% of the prejudice" whether they were "slightly" Asian or 100%. Participants described encounters, usually in school settings, where others directly asked, "What are you anyway?" The study also noted how little social support is available to provide these individuals with the strategies of resisting this multiracial racism.



In Collin's (2000) study of biracial Japanese Americans, he found that all the participants wanted people to know how it felt to be labeled as something they are not, and to be recognized as their self-named identities. Identity conflict and partial or complete failure to integrate both heritages into a cohesive racial identity was evident in most of the participants when they were young. Many indicated that their development was influenced profoundly by their experience in the school context. Limited contact with biracial or other children of color was a major factor and resulted in a generally negative development and validation of self. This was due to race-based acts of discrimination, bias, and stigmatization. Many felt rejected by members of both races since they were without peers who were similar to themselves. Most participants asserted their biracial identities gradually and experienced periods of confusion before reaching a positive identity.

While most biracials say they are "half-and-half" of one culture and another, some of the participants of the study called themselves "doubles". This is because they have 'twice as much' as the average person in terms of culture. This more positive term is replacing the traditionally negative term of hapa (half-and-half) in Japan, who believe they are unique and special. Rather than having two different cultures, this term falls within the category of a multiple identity, creating something that is more than the sum of its parts (Collins, 2000).

Williams (2011) found that most of the participants in her study had mainly White friend groups when they were younger, but as they got older, transitioned to mainly Black friend groups. Those who did not change friend groups either did not have the opportunity to do so due to the racial composition of their schools, or they chose not to choose between their two races and had a friend group consisting of neither or other biracials.

Unfortunately, the students who changed from White friend groups to Black, still did not entirely feel as if they fit in with either of their friend groups. Additionally, in another study, biracial students also had to deal with discrimination and racial slurs by other students (Lewis, 2001). Findings by Brackett et al. (2006) suggest that not fitting into other people's conceptions of racial categories may lead to experiencing more racial discrimination.

Cheng and Klugman (2010) found that most biracials tend to be less attached to their schools than their corresponding monoracial groups, suggesting that a sense of belonging is increased with the identification of a large distinct in-group. This lack of attachment is because multiracial adolescents are defining themselves as distinct from monoracial students by identifying with multiple racial groups.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of Impostor Phenomenon (IP) refers to individuals who, despite being successful according to external standards, do not experience an internal sense of success. They consider themselves “impostors”. They believe that their success has not come from their ability, but rather them having worked harder, manipulated others’ impressions of themselves, or sheer luck (Clance & Imes, 1978). IP was originally thought to be prevalent in females (Clance & Imes, 1978), but multiple other studies on different populations failed to find any differences in IP between sexes (Bussotti, 1990; Dingman, 1987; Harvey, 1981; Langford, 1990; Topping, 1983).

The term Impostor Phenomenon was coined in 1974 by Drs. Clance and Imes to describe people that doubt their abilities and competencies. These people ignore all evidence of competence and feel as if they are going to be exposed as an ‘impostor’ at any time. The term ‘impostor phenomenon’ was used instead of the common name in social media “impostor syndrome”, due to the terminology referring to an official medical diagnosis, of which Impostor Phenomenon is not (Kaplan, 2009). People who experience IP would not label themselves as impostors, but if they read the description, they would immediately connect to it. It should be noted that IP is not relevant to people who are actual impostors or frauds. Frauds are people who have intentionally lied or used deception in a way that resulted in them achieving a certain status or succeeding in a task not through their own abilities or competence. People who experience IP are not actual impostors, but do feel as if they are, and cannot accept their abilities and enjoy their successes. As a result of these feelings, they often limit their own capabilities and stay in positions that are less than their abilities (Clance, 1985).

## Terms to Know

The following terms have been operationally defined for this study:

1. **Multiracial-** Individuals who have biological parents who identify with different single-race groups or at least one parent who identifies multiracially (Harris, 2002). This term is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘biracial’ when cited from literature and during interviews.
2. **Assimilation-** This is said to have fully occurred “when the impact of the norms associated with the culture of origin becomes very small, at which point the person has effectively become a member of the culture of residence” (Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983). In this context, ‘culture of residence’ can include school, friend group, extracurricular activity, family, etc.
3. **Agricultural Education-** Classes in public schools specifically pertaining to agriculture that involve the interrelationship between 3 concepts: classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience, and agricultural youth organization participation (Phipps & Osborne, 1988).
4. **National FFA Organization-** An extracurricular club that can also be done in school that has programs “designed to encourage students’ interest in agricultural careers through activities including: career development events, awards programs, scholarships and leadership programs” (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). This youth organization contains individual chapters at the high school level.
5. **Advisor-** Teacher(s) who are head of their school’s FFA chapter, coach competition teams, and teach agriculture classes.
6. **Impostor-** Someone who experiences Imposter Phenomenon who is not actual impostor or fraud, but feels as if they are. They cannot accept their abilities and

enjoy their successes, and often limit their own capabilities as a result of these feelings (Clance, 1985).

7. **Code Switching-** Code switching may be defined as the use of more than one language or language variety concurrently in conversation (Auer, 1988). For the purpose of this study, languages can include Black Standard English (Young, 2009), as well as how English is spoken, such as the use different dialects and accents.

## **Need for the Study**

### ***Purpose and Research Questions***

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the lived experiences of multiracial graduates of secondary Agricultural Education programs. Agriculture Education programs are classes in public schools that involve the interrelationship between 3 concepts: classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience, and agricultural youth organization participation (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). The participation in an agricultural youth organization is done through the National FFA Organization (FFA). FFA programs are designed to encourage students' interest in agricultural careers through activities including: career development events, awards programs, scholarships and leadership programs (Phipps & Osborne, 1988).

By studying the lived experiences of the multiracial participants in secondary Agricultural Education, the researcher analyzed how the interactions described by the participants between society, family, school faculty, and peers are impactful to multiracial students, and how those impacts affect their feelings impostorism. Understanding these

experiences can be beneficial in many ways. For example, understanding these students' experiences can be beneficial for current and future educators who want to be more inclusive in their classroom endeavors, as well as to those who do not know they are being exclusive, are just now being made aware of it, and want to correct it.

Furthermore, the National FFA Organization as a whole can be made aware of a membership they do not realize they possess, learn how to better serve that population, and allow those members to have a voice and recognition within their organization. All of these things may improve secondary Agricultural Education, potentially contributing to more empowered and accepted students, and a more inclusive organization.

This study allows us to examine if multiracial students have had feelings of Impostor Phenomena due to their multiple racial heritages during their enrollment in secondary agricultural education programs. Thus, the specific research questions are as follow:

*Question 1:* What is the multiracial student perspective of lived experience in secondary Agricultural Education?

*Question 2:* Which elements of racial Impostor Phenomenon existed during the secondary Agricultural Education experience?

### **Limitations**

When it comes to research, there will always be limitations. Qualitative research uses the researcher to both collect the data and to then interpret it. Being that the researcher identifies as multiracial and is also a former student in secondary agricultural education, she continuously used reflection to be aware of her own personal biases. The researcher attempted to limit these biases through reflection with her advisor and through journaling.

Additionally, the research participants were limited to the names provided to the researcher by agricultural teachers and professors across the country. Lack of participants could imply that these teachers and professors with contacts either did not know about the study, did not care about the study, or did not have the contact information of the possibly participants. It is also possible that the teachers and professors did not believe the students would bring value to the study or that the study itself was not valuable. All in all, the study hinged on the teachers and professors selecting students and giving them the study's information for the opportunity to participate.

The research was also possibly limited in potential participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of 39 participants interested in the study, only eight were interviewed. During the pandemic, Zoom or other video conferencing applications were vastly utilized by schools and employers to conduct classes and work. The interviews being conducted over Zoom may have been a limitation being that potential participants were tired of constantly having to use Zoom, and thus not participated in the interviews.

Additionally, the data collected for this study was self-reported, thus assuming participants were truthful in their responses to my interview questions. Participants' life experiences and experiences in secondary agricultural education may vary; this is because each of the participants were from different states across the U.S. and different stages of life. While the researcher believes the sample data collected is a somewhat accurate representation, it is also possible that a larger sample size would make for more robust findings.

The racial composition of the participants was also limitation. While there were eight participants, five of the eight identified a parent as Black, two identified a parent as

being of Asian descent, and one identified their parent as Hispanic. However, one of the parents of Asian descent also identified Biracial as well, being Filipino and Hispanic. The participant with a Hispanic parent also had another parent who was of Biracial heritage, being Black and British. This being said, six out of the eight participants identified Black as one of their racial heritages. Having a more diverse racial makeup of the participants may have given more insightful findings. Additionally, all the participants had a parent who identified as white; thus, there was no insight into multiracials who identified with solely two (or more) minority races.

Another possible limitation was that all participants went to predominantly White high schools. Along with that, seven of the eight participants identified as female. Thus, our findings are limited pertaining to those multiracial individuals who are male and/or those who attended more diverse institutions with secondary agriculture education courses/programs.

During the interviews, there was a limiting factor of internet connection. During interviews, there were connectivity issues where the Zoom call would be disrupted, or videos would pause or sound would break up during the participant's answers to the research questions. This sometimes made it difficult for conversation and stories of experiences to flow smoothly without frustration. This is a limitation due to participants having to re-tell portions of their stories or answers with less detail or emotion as they had done on their first attempt.



## CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Impostor Phenomenon**

The concept of Impostor Phenomenon (IP) refers to individuals who, despite being successful according to external standards, do not experience an internal sense of success. They consider themselves “impostors”. They believe that their success has not come from their ability, but rather them having worked harder, manipulated others’ impressions of themselves, or sheer luck (Clance & Imes, 1978). IP was originally thought to be prevalent in females (Clance & Imes, 1978), but multiple other studies on different populations failed to find any differences in IP between sexes (Bussotti, 1990; Dingman, 1987; Harvey, 1981; Langford, 1990; Topping, 1983).

The term Impostor Phenomenon was coined in 1974 by Drs. Clance and Imes to describe people that doubt their abilities and competencies. These people ignore all evidence of competence and feel as if they are going to be exposed as an ‘impostor’ at any time. The term ‘impostor phenomenon’ was used instead of the common name in social media “impostor syndrome”, due to the terminology referring to an official medical diagnosis, of which Impostor Phenomenon is not (Kaplan, 2009). People who experience IP would not label themselves as impostors, but if they read the description, they would immediately connect to it. It should be noted that IP is not relevant to people who are actual impostors or frauds. Frauds are people who have intentionally lied or used deception in a way that resulted in them achieving a certain status or succeeding in a task not through their own abilities or competence. People who experience IP are not actual impostors, but do feel as if they are, and cannot accept their abilities and enjoy their successes. As a result

of these feelings, they often limit their own capabilities and stay in positions that are less than their abilities (Clance, 1985).

### **The Impostor Profile**

Clance (1985) mentions six dimensions in which individuals experiencing IP have characteristics of. While Clance states that not all who experience IP have all the characteristics, they at least experience two of the six dimensions. These dimensions may be expressed in different ways varying on the individual.

### ***Impostor Cycle***

The first of the 6 dimensions is when people who experience Impostor Phenomenon go through what is called an “impostor cycle”. Clance (1985) states this cycle as:

Invitation – Acceptance—Joy/Good Feelings—Bad Dreams/Worry/Fear—  
Immobility/Procrastination—Frenzied Work—Success—Praise—Relief—New  
Challenge—Denial of Previous Success—Fear Again.

In a study by Clance et al. (1995), Impostors found themselves trapped in this behavior pattern, thus reinforcing the thought that their success was not due to their own abilities, but due to some other contributing factor. First the cycle starts through the acceptance of a task, project, test, etc., accompanied by a feeling of joy at the opportunity. Once they have been assigned this task, they start experiencing doubts that they are able to complete said task. Feelings of anxiety, worry, and fraudulence start to emerge. Because of these feelings, these individuals do one of two things. One of the two is over preparation. They spend countless days and hours pouring themselves over their work or studies to try and make sure their work is perfect so that no one discovers that they are in fact incompetent, and ‘found out’ as the fraud they think they are. They spend over the amount of time necessary for the completion of a task in the attempt to make it flawless.

Alternatively, there is procrastination. Considering the individuals feel like they are not competent enough to do the task, they put off attempting it until the last possible moment. Both of these situations are due to the fear of failure. Regardless of over preparation or procrastination, these individuals are successful and complete the task seamlessly, because whether they believe it or not, they are in fact competent. This success gives them temporary relief. Unfortunately, because of their overpreparation or procrastination, they think that they either have to repeat the exact same process to succeed, or that the success was due to sheer luck and nothing to do with their abilities. This reinforces their belief that their success is not due to their competence, inhibiting their ability to eternalize that success, no matter the amount of success or praise they receive. That temporary relief fades once they accept another task, which starts the feelings of anxiety and fraudulence all over again, thus completing the “impostor cycle” (Clance, 1985).

Some people who experience IP feel as if they just possess a very good ability to manage the impressions that other people have about them, thus hiding their perceived ‘fraudulence’. These individuals usually make great first impressions and believe that they were only hired, or accepted into a particular program, because they were able to get others to like them or to believe that they are more capable than they actually are. They emphasized their strengths and acted like they knew what they were doing. Although now that they were accepted into their role, they wonder if they can really accomplish everything that they said they could. Because of this, any praise they receive is taken as false praise due to the belief that the person giving it is only praising them because of their *impression* of them, and not their actual work. They believe that they cannot live up to the picture they have portrayed of themselves (Clance, 1985). They feel as if they are

“bluffing” their way through life and are constantly dealing with a fear of exposure (Kets de Vries, 2005).

### ***The Need to be Special, to be the Very Best***

People suffering from IP have been top performers, or among the best, since adolescents. They have difficulty accepting the fact that they are one among many exceptional people and that they cannot remain number one forever. They yearn to be special, and dismiss their talents in presumption of stupidity if not the very best (Clance, 1985).

### ***Superwoman/Superman Aspects***

Imposters are perfectionistic in their need to be the best and expect to do so flawlessly and with ease. This goal is difficult or impossible to obtain given our humanity, thus giving those with IP feelings of failure. The thought of easing up and expecting less of themselves creates almost immediate panic for these perfectionists. There is an underlying belief that they must be perfect in order to be loveable that causes this fear. They believe “If I’m not perfect, no one will like me” (Clance, 1985).

### ***Fear of Failure***

When those who experience IP have set a goal for themselves, they experience terror when thinking of failure. Extreme anxiety occurs at the thought that they’ve made a mistake, and take drastic measure to not seem foolish to others. They work extremely hard to making sure they never fail because shame and humiliation are equated with underperformance and making mistakes (Clance, 1985).

If they failed in their own eyes or appeared less than capable to others in any way, they're afraid that they would experience this shame, self-hatred, and a total loss of self-esteem. The hard work, perfectionism, and avoidance of difficult intellectual endeavors are all means of preventing any kind of failure (Clance, 1985).

Those who suffer from IP want to avoid failure at all costs, even though they know that failure is a necessary part of life. Shame is mentioned by Langford and Clance (1993) to be a negative effect experienced by impostors as well. They are afraid of that shame as well as the loss of self-esteem and the self-hatred if they fail or seem less than capable. They avoid failure at all costs through their dedication, perfectionism, and avoidance of difficult intellectual endeavors (Clance, 1985).

### ***Denial of Competence and Discounting Praise***

Those who suffer from IP are “ingenious” in their ability to deny or disclaim the objective evidence that they are indeed intelligent and/or successful (Clance, 1985). They develop ways to discount proof that they are competent and refuse to accept and internalize this obvious proof. They possess the inability to accept positive feedback and distort any resulting praise. Paradoxically, they still want to know that they're competent, well liked, and respected (Clance, 1985).

### ***Fear of and Guilt About Success***

Fear of success is very real in those who suffer from IP. They are frightened of the consequences of success that they crave. Women are scared that their success can interfere with relationships and their image deemed threatening or unfeminine. Men fear success

due to the messages relaying that they cannot be more successful than their fathers, or that they should not be competitive for religious or familial reasons.

When IP sufferers perceive their success as atypical from their upbringing, they often feel guilty because of it. Feelings of IP are used to provide them with a way to stay humble so that they can say “I’m not really different or more successful than anyone else.” They are also fearful that their success will lead to being asked to take on more responsibility. If they were to acknowledge their success, that would mean more responsibility and demands that they may not be able to meet.

### **IP and Education**

Parkman (2016) states:

“Numerous studies and articles have documented the prevalence of the Imposter Phenomenon in higher education. The research presents IP tendencies in a variety of student populations, in faculty and in staff members. While many perceive the college campus as an oasis of tranquility where intellectual communities strive to seek and share knowledge in a supportive environment the reality in most cases is markedly different” (p. 53).

IP has been documented across a variety of majors and disciplines at the undergraduate level. Patzak et al. (2017), examined first-year undergraduate students and found that those with lower self-compassion scores tended to be higher on the IP scale. Self-compassion involves being kind to oneself when failing, perceiving one’s inadequacies as part of the human condition, and being mindful about negative aspects of one’s self. They also found that women tended to have higher measures of IP and lower self-compassion scores than men, as well as suggesting interventions to enhance self-compassions as a possible means to overcome impostor feelings. The results of Matsuo’s (2020) study suggested that the primary predictor of one’s impostor feelings is the aspiration of self-acceptance (i.e. psychological growth, autonomy, and self-regard). The

same study also suggested that use of techniques that foster autonomy helps internalize their success as their achievement.

### **IP and Race**

“Research indicates that IP scores are higher for students in minority populations as a group” (Parkman, 2016). IP has found to be influenced by experiences of racial discrimination (Bernard et al., 2018), primarily for the feelings of intellectual incompetence (Clance & Imes, 1978). Lige et al. (2016) found that self-esteem mediated this relationship between racial identity and IP. The possibility of racial discrimination experiences is suggested to lead to social isolation that may precede and perpetuate cognitions of IP, particularly at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), and thus making internal attributions or blaming themselves to make sense of this racial discrimination (Bernard et al., 2018). “It is probably the case that ethnic minority students on a predominantly White campus share an ethnic minority experience that can be stressful” (Cokely, et al., 2013). Bernard et al. (2018) also found that their results are “consistent with literature, suggesting that having a positive image towards oneself and one’s ethnic group can repudiate the development and internalization of feelings and messages of inferiority fueled by discriminatory encounters.”

### **IP and Secondary Education/Youth**

Traits of IP have been identified in adults, but currently there is little research reported regarding adolescents when it comes to imposter phenomenon. In the literature that does exist, high school students who suffer from IP often hold high positions in clubs etc., but still “view themselves as ineffectively meeting the demands of social situations. Relative to non-impostors, the impostors were more likely to experience feelings of social inadequacy. During their high school years, they were very desirous of being more socially

accepted” (Grays, 1991). High school impostors were also “more likely than nonimpostors to have very often felt sad and depressed and to have very often desired isolation from others in order to pursue their own thoughts and interests” (Grays, 1991), although Cromwell et al. (1990) did not find evidence to support that these high school Impostors are more likely to be introverts rather than extroverts.

Additionally, Caselman et al. (2006) found that a predictor of IP in both male and female adolescents is Friend Support, with predictors for adolescent females to also include Classmate Support and Dependability. Although, the rate at which both adolescent male and females experience feelings of IP at approximately the same rate. “When normal imposter feelings arise from new or challenging tasks, if one has a close friend with whom to discuss these and discover that the other, too, has faced such thoughts and feelings, a sense of connection and authenticity take place” (Caselman et al, 2006). Miller and Stiver (1997) suggest that we are more able to accept our feelings as legitimate when someone “goes with us in the feelings” (p. 33).

### **IP in regard to Race**

To date Impostor Phenomenon has focused on the intellectual phoniness of an individual. The significance of this study is to see if Impostor Phenomenon, in regard to multiracial individuals and their races, is prevalent due to the belief that they do not have the right to fully claim any of the races within themselves. While most of the time symptoms of IP are specific to intellectual and academic pursuits, Clance (1985) states that IP can spill over into relationships. Individuals who experience IP are doubtful of their abilities although they do possess these abilities. Those who may experience racial IP are multiracial, and while they possess multiple races, they may have come to believe that they are not “enough” of either of their races to fully claim that they are members of those races.



The difference between the two is that IP is based on the individuals' feelings, while racial IP is based on the individual's feelings in reference to whether society allows them to be labeled as the race(s) they claim to be.

While those who experience IP are always successful in their endeavors, those who experience racial IP have the possibility of failure, not by their genetics, but because the society they are in does not accept them as the race(s) they choose to identify as. They then can try to prove their claim to their race(s), through knowledge or a picture, but their claim can still be rejected by society. One issue that multiracial individuals often contend with is trying to uncover the basis of racial categories, in order to understand why it is that existing racial categories in our society do no account for them (Shih et al., 2007). The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education programs and discover if they experience feelings of Impostor Phenomenon regarding their race.

### **Diversity in Agricultural Education**

Although schools vary vastly from state to state across the United States, they all are continuously increasing in racial diversity, making it imperative for schools to increase their awareness of said diversity as well. This awareness should also come to include those extracurricular activities associated with the schools, such as secondary agricultural education programs. LaVergne (2008) states:

“Diversity inclusion is an educational philosophy that welcomes all learners by actively engaging them in secondary agricultural education programs regardless of their race, ethnicity, or exceptionality. Diversity inclusion is also the act of acknowledging these differences and in turn, fostering an atmosphere to effectively teach every student in the classroom.” (p. 141)

LaVergne (2012) prompts that “Teachers must understand that their goal to promote diversity inclusion is not an isolated mission but rather a school-wide effort.” This means

the mission of diversity and inclusion is not only for the teachers, but of the students and parents as well. Loudenslager (2006) goes on to say:

“Agricultural education’s record of attracting and serving a diverse student body is mixed at best. We have made great progress in gender and geographic (rural, urban and suburban) diversification. But, the goal of attracting and fully engaging all students of color and varied socio-economic means and locales has been elusive.”  
(p. 2).

### CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

To examine the lived experiences of multiracial graduates in secondary Agricultural Education programs across the United States, a multiple-case design study design was implemented. A case study facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Crabtree & Miller (1999) state an advantage to this approach being the close collaboration between researcher and the participant and enabling them to tell their stories. Having multiple cases allows the researcher to explore differences within each of the cases and draw comparisons (Yin, 2003). For the current study, the researcher sought to examine the lived experiences of multiracial students within secondary agricultural education programs and identify if they experienced elements of racial Imposter Phenomenon.

After receiving approval (#57936) from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), email advertisements were utilized by the researcher to obtain participants who were of a multiracial background and who were also enrolled in secondary agricultural education programs. Consent was obtained from each of the participants prior to the research being conducted.

This study allows us to examine if multiracial students have had feelings of Impostor Phenomena due to their multiple racial heritages during their enrolment in secondary agricultural education programs. Thus, the specific research questions are as follow:

*Question 1:* What is the multiracial student perspective of lived experience in secondary Agricultural Education?

*Question 2: Which elements of racial Impostor Phenomenon existed during the secondary Agricultural Education experience?*

Interviews were conducted in the form of on-on-one Zoom calls. Zoom allowed for the recording of the interview, as well as the transcription of those interviews. All interviews were conducted by the researcher. The researcher had 10 questions ready to last between 25-45 minutes, though the interviews resembled more of a guided conversation. Longhurst (2003) states, “Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important” (p.145). Dunn (2005) explained the semi-structured interview as a form of interviewing that has a degree of predetermined order, it still has high flexibility for issues addressed by the informant. These interviews conducted over Zoom allowed for the participants to be in locations of their choosing, as to give a sense of comfort during the interviews. Twenty possible follow up questions were prepared to be asked as further probing questions to possible answers. Interviews lasted from 25 minutes to an hour and fifteen minutes.

The researcher reflected on each interview after it was conducted and recorded these reflections in a journal. Field notes were taken during each interview. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for coding and interpretation.

### **Researchers Role and Reflexivity**

The researcher acknowledged their personal bias throughout the study seeing as her perceptions of multiracialism and Agricultural Education have been shaped through her own personal experiences. The researcher identifies as a person of multiracial heritage whose father is White and mother is a first-generation U.S. citizen of 25 years, originating

from Venezuela. She grew up in rural Alabama where Career and Technical Education (CTE) is a staple of almost every student's high school career, whether that be through FFA, Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), or some other facet. Her older brother, father, and grandfather were all alums of the FFA, so the path to take was clear. The researcher's parents were nothing but supportive throughout the entire four years of endless Leadership and Career Development Events (LDE's & CDE's), officer meetings, conventions, and volunteer opportunities. FFA had sparked an interest that soon became a passion and a career goal.

After graduation, the researcher went to college at Mississippi State University with the intention of a general Agriculture degree. While she truly wanted to be an Agriculture Educator, in her limited experience, she had only ever been exposed to male Agriculture teachers in classrooms that were also predominantly male once you passed the intro classes. She was worried that she would be looked down upon as a female agriculture teacher in the profession, and that she would not be able to gain the respect from the students that she would deserve. After her first year of college, she discovered that there were more female teachers than she had realized, and that there was an ever-growing number of female students all throughout agriculture. Thus, despite her precautions, the researcher changed majors in sophomore year with her parent's full support and graduated as an Agricultural Educator.

While reflecting on past experiences, the researcher realized that she was very sheltered to the ways of the world while growing up, and that there were certain incidents she went through as a multiracial individual in high school and FFA that she did not recognize as harmful at the time. Because of this, she was curious if others had experienced

similar situations. In her research, she is looking at populations that look like herself: multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education programs.

Being multiracial, as well as having also been a part of a secondary agricultural education program, the researcher is aware of the biases that she brings to the study and how this can affect the role of the interview facilitation and the interpretation of the findings. To mitigate this effect, the researcher was in close contact with and met continuously with her graduate advisor, who has over eleven years' experience in research within the context of multiculturalism and underserved youth populations, to follow-up and debrief her findings. Special emphasis was made to make sure the meanings of the answers given by the participants held true and were not "bent" to fit the researcher's bias.

### **Participant Recruitment Procedure**

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education and to see if they experienced racial imposter phenomenon during that time. To gather participants, emails were sent to college professors of Agricultural Education who then forwarded it to those they thought might be eligible. In the email, a Qualtrics survey was used to gauge interest in participating in the study. Twenty-seven participants of the survey were interested in participating, but when given the opportunity to participate through a Doodle poll, only nine individuals scheduled an interview time. Doodle poll is an online scheduling site. Participants were selected first based on if they were multiracial, and then if they were graduates of secondary agricultural education programs. Regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, or other intersecting identities, those who completed the Doodle poll for an interview time were selected to participate. A total of eight interviews were conducted out of the nine that completed the online questionnaire. The one remaining individual had misread the qualifications and was

currently enrolled in a secondary agricultural education program and had not yet graduated. The interview was terminated after the qualifications were made clear and the researcher thanked them for their time regardless.

Because of the potential participant qualification limitations, the information gathered will be skewed in that the perspective of the participants was that of those who had already graduated, thus their experiences varied in how long it had been since participation in secondary agricultural education. While some participants were recent graduates and currently enrolled in college, others had already graduated college and were currently Agricultural Educators themselves.

I chose to sample graduates who are of multiracial descent because I was curious if they shared the same experiences as my own. Those who have already graduated from these secondary agricultural education programs are similar in age and have had time to digest their former experiences. The interviews were more conversational and more familiar because of my similarities with the participants, which I stated at the beginning of the interviews to establish rapport, than if these similarities were to not exist. Thus, I hoped that sharing these similarities created a safe environment in which the participants were able to share authentic experiences and reflect upon them with me.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Initial contact was made September 14 of 2020 with professors at various colleges as well as potential participants. Interviews were conducted the weeks of October 4-24 and November 1-21 of 2020. Notes were taken throughout each interview as well as audio and video recordings via the Zoom application. The interview recordings were username and password protected and only able to be viewed by the researcher as to maintain confidentiality. A standard introduction of the researcher and the study was done as a

general welcome and then used as a transition into the outline of how the interview would proceed. The interview began after all clarifying questions were answered. Ten questions, along with clarifying sub questions, were asked and spoken in English. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and lasted between twenty-five minutes and an hour and 15 minutes.

### **Data Recording Procedure**

Interviews were conducted in the form of on-on-one Zoom calls. Zoom allowed for the recording of the interview, as well as the transcription of those interviews. All interviews were conducted by the researcher. The researcher had 10 questions ready to last between 25-45 minutes, though the interviews resembled more of a guided conversation. Longhurst (2003) states, “Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important” (p.145). Dunn (2005) explained the semi-structured interview as a form of interviewing that has a degree of predetermined order, it still has high flexibility for issues addressed by the informant. These interviews conducted over Zoom allowed for the participants to be in locations of their choosing, as to give a sense of comfort during the interviews. Twenty possible follow up questions were prepared to be asked as further probing questions to possible answers. Interviews lasted from 25 minutes to an hour and fifteen minutes.

The researcher reflected on each interview after it was conducted and recorded these reflections in a journal. Field notes were taken during each interview. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for coding and interpretation.



## **Participants**

The eight participants in this study all are residents of the United States and located in states of Arizona, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The participant's ages ranged from 18 to 29. The participant's races and ethnicities, identified to be possessed by at least one participant were: White (8), Black (6), Asian (2), and Hispanic (2). For two of the eight participants who identified one of their parents as White, it is worth mentioning that said parents are of European descent, specifically British and French. Also, the two participants who identified a parent as Hispanic are specifically of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent. Lastly, the two participants who identified a parent as Asian are of Filipino and Taiwanese. Two of the eight participants also identified one of their parents as being multiracial as well.

All participants were graduates of secondary education as well as agricultural education. Three of the eight participants are current Agricultural educators, and four are currently earning a degree in Agricultural Education. Because I did not have the contact information of the participants, I sent my request for interview participants to my research advisor who then distributed it to Agricultural Education professors across the U.S. Those professors then distributed it to those individuals who they knew were eligible for participation in the study. Those who responded to my request and met the eligibility requirements were interviewed. As stated previously, nine individuals responded with interest and eight were interviewed. The one individual who had responded with interest had misread the qualifications and was still currently enrolled in secondary education, thus making them ineligible. To protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used for their names. The demographics for the participants are listed in Table 1.

Table 3.1

*Participant Demographics*

Alias	Race and Ethnicity	Gender	Career	State
Rachael	Black, White (British), Hispanic (Mexican)	Female	College	KY
Meagan	Black, White	Female	College	KY
Torri	Black, White	Female	Professional	TN
Shanika	Black, White	Female	Professional	AZ
Anaya	Black, White (French)	Female	College	TX
Kaitlyn	Asian (Filipino), White, Hispanic (Puerto Rican)	Female	Professional	AZ
Isaac	Black, White	Male	College	MO
Stephanie	Asian (Taiwanese), White	Female	College	NC

***Rachael***

Rachael’s father is Black and White, specifically British, and her mother is Hispanic, specifically Mexican. Rachael has a contagious energy and speaks avidly with her hands in a true Gen-Z manner. She has slightly tanned skin with straight, dark hair right below her shoulders.

She is a freshman currently enrolled as an AgEd major Kentucky. She sits at the desk in her dorm, with a multi-color quilt on her bed behind her. She speaks with emotion in all her answers. Multiple times she has to pause to collect herself before replying to a question. She speaks very freely and honestly about her experiences.

### *Meagan*

Meagan's father is Black, and mother is White. She sits at her desk with her dark hair straightened, and swishes back in forth in her chair throughout the interview. She is a freshman in Kentucky enrolled in AgEd. Behind her is her brightly colored dorm room with all the pastel-colored decorations you can imagine. She has at least six plushy pillows on top of a blue quilt on the bed behind her. At first, Meagan responds to questions timidly, but after a bit, she gains more confidence and gives more and more detail. She often gives of a sad tone when speaking of her past experiences.

### *Torri*

Torri's mother is White, and father is Black, although Torri herself is very pale, as if both her parents are White. She has curly black hair pulled up into a bun after a long day at work. She talks with a southern accent although her, as she describes, "inner Black girl" comes out every once and a while when she is referring to some of her past experiences, or when she is getting riled up.

Torri had a very calming yet playful sense about her. After introducing themselves, it was as if the researcher had known her and her story for years. Torri talked with comfortability from the start of the interview and became more and more playful as the interview continued. She sat at her kitchen island with her camera facing her brick living room wall as her husband was making dinner. As she answered questions, she always had a smile on her face and would look to her husband, who was behind the camera, when mentioning family as if she was looking for reassurance or a laugh to an inside joke.

Halfway through the interview, the wifi connection becomes unstable, so she goes outside where it is dark out, and her face is lit by a single lamp post while she sits on her

wooden front porch steps and her dogs bark in the background. When the interview concluded, Torri thanked the researcher for shedding light on the research topic and that she was greatly looking forward to the finished product.

### ***Shanika***

Shanika is a person you can accurately describe as “go-with-the-flow”. She sat in front of the camera at her dining room table with poise and refinement. She has very tan skin paired with long dark curly hair to her belt. You could tell she was a former State FFA officer by the way she responded to questions and the flow of her voice, with each of her words coming out in a round fluid shape. She sometimes gives a sense of loneliness when speaking about some of her school experiences.

Shanika’s mother is Black, and father is White, although being raised solely by her mother, as well as attaining more of her mother’s features, she also identifies as Black. Shanika received her bachelors in AgEd and is now teaching in Arizona, where she grew up.

### ***Anaya***

When you think of a ‘spit-fire’, you think of Anaya. Anaya’s father is Black, and her mother is White, more specifically French. She has curly shoulder length hair, lightly tanned skin, and glasses on her nose. During the interview, Anaya sits on the floor of her bedroom with her back to the solid-colored wall next to a window. Her experiences show us that she is fully invested in everything that she does and is extremely passionate. She articulates everything she says and is very quick witted. She holds herself, and everyone

else, to a high standard in which to live up to. She is currently enrolled at one of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in Texas.

### ***Kaitlyn***

Kaitlyn's father is White, while her mother is both Filipino and Puerto Rican. When looking at her, she has olive-tanned skin, ambiguous features, and light brown hair that's dyed at the tips. She has a bubbly and open personality and meshes with the researcher instantly. She has her Masters in AgEd, and is currently teaching in her home state of Arizona

For the interview she sits at a desk in her room with white walls. When asked specific questions, she has a certain tone to herself when answering, as if the answer was something she had never thought about and was just now realizing about herself or her experiences. After the interview, Kaitlyn poses multiple questions to the researcher about her own life growing up and talk for several minutes before concluding the call.

### ***Isaac***

Isaac's father is Black, and his mother is Black and White. Isaac is the living, breathing definition of professional. He sits in his desk chair, with a Black Lives Matter poster on his wall, shoulders back, and talks with assurance of every word. He wears a polo shirt, black glasses, and a fresh haircut. He has a sense of duty to his community throughout the entire interview, and what he can do to give back to it. He is currently enrolled in college to be an Agricultural Educator in Michigan.

He gives long and thoughtful answers to all the researchers questions. The more he talks, the more comfortable he gets. He slowly starts to swing side to side in his chair, he

leans back ever so slightly, and eventually rests his hands behind his head while talking towards the end of the interview.

### ***Stephanie***

Stephanie's father is Asian, specifically Taiwanese, and her mother is White. She is a freshman in North Carolina and sits with her laptop in front of her while she perches on her bed. She was a white headboard against walls the color of newborn chicks, with white picture frames above her head. She has her hair in a ponytail with an orange floral headband, and hair tucked behind one ear, and headphones in the other.

She comes off timid at first, and has short, to the point answers. Though, after asking follow-up questions, she explains some of her experiences more in depth, and becomes more confident in her answers as the interview continues. She is very optimistic, but still sees the world as it is, although she puts a good light on most of her life experiences.

### **Data Transcription and Analysis**

Interviews were transcribed via Zoom automatically. The researcher relistened to each of the interviews recorded by the application and compared the recording to the transcript, both to ensure accuracy and to refamiliarize herself with the data. This transcription is imperative for interpretation of data because transcription facilitates the close examination of the data (Tracy, 2013). The research found this to be true as she began to develop several themes before coding began. The researcher also had to interpret verbal and nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, hand gestures, and changes in pitch to determine if these cues were meaningful or significant. The researcher also recorded disfluencies such as 'ummm' and long pauses, as they indicated various emotions (Tracy,

2013). Field notes were also taken during the interview. During the review of the field notes and transcript, the researcher gained a general understanding of the information and was able to reflect and develop several themes before the beginning of the coding process.

### **Coding Process**

Coding was conducted in two phases. Coding occurred on major topics discussed in the interviews, statements that were continuously repeated by multiple participants, and overall feelings the researcher perceived from the participants.

When the researcher was beginning their exploratory study, she focused on her first research question: What is the multiracial student perspective of lived experience in secondary Agricultural Education? To start the first cycle of coding methods she began by attribute coding, also known as descriptive coding and setting/context codes (Richards, 2015; Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). This is where the researcher recognized all the data that they had as a whole. This includes audio recordings, transcriptions, and field notes. After the attribute coding, the researcher then transitioned to holistic coding (Saldaña, 2015). She went through the entirety of audio recordings and transcriptions to make herself familiar with all of the data. She made sure to make note of everything that immediately stood out to her. Next, the researcher began In Vivo coding. She did this by going through the recordings once again, as well as the transcripts, and highlighting and picking out all the responses that stood out once more through repetitive words used by the participants themselves (Strauss, 1987). After In Vivo coding, the researcher then transitioned into eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2015). She did this by going through the and analyzing the transcripts line-by-line.

During the researchers second cycle of coding the researcher focused in the second research question: Which elements of racial Impostor Phenomenon existed during the

secondary Agricultural Education experience? For this question the researcher used Elaborative coding. This allowed the researcher to “refine theoretical constructs from a previous study, and relevant text is selected with those constructs in mind.” The researcher used the six dimensions of Impostor Phenomenon as the constructs and assigned each dimension a color in which she then highlighted data that fit each code in the corresponding color. The presence of two or more dimensions of IP alluded to experiences of Impostor Phenomenon within the participants.



## CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to understand the lived experiences of multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education. In this chapter the researcher will discuss the findings for the following research questions:

*Question 1:* What is the multiracial student perspective of lived experience in secondary Agricultural Education?

*Question 2:* Which elements of racial Impostor Phenomenon existed during the secondary Agricultural Education experience?

After a thorough set of coding, it was determined that RQ1 was best answered through the form of two themes that contained 10 subthemes, while RQ2 provided an awareness of the elements of Impostor Phenomenon that the participants best related to.

### **Multiracial Students' Lived Experiences**

Participants recalled many stories of their time as members in the FFA, what their peer and teacher relationships were like, their family dynamics, as well as encounters with those individuals in the surrounding community.

It is important to note that all participants live in different areas of the United States and possess different racial compositions, and different identities that give them unique experiences that they each processed through in their own ways. The difference between racial composition and identities being that the participants can be multiracial but not all of them choose to identify as such, and thus use a monoracial identity.

Despite these differences, two themes and 10 sub-themes emerged that affected how they all went about their lives. Participants' races and identities were perceived

differently to different people, and these perceptions, whether accurate or not, played significant roles in the participants' daily lives.

While the participants have different racial makeups, and live across different parts of the United States, they all shared similar experience in one area or another. Some of these experiences had to do with their perception of their identity, desire to be accepted by those around them, interactions where they are asked "What are you?", and having to educate those around them.

### ***Identity***

While all the participants are multiracial, not all of them identified that way. Four of the participants, Meagan, Anaya, Torri, and Kaitlyn, all identified as multiracial. The other four, Isaac, Rachael, Shanika, and Stephanie, identify monoracially. The researcher found that the participants went through various stages concerning their identity. This included trying to figure out what to identify as, proving their races to others, wanting to be accepted, assimilation and code switching, finally accepting an identity, and educating others on racial matters.

**Figuring it out / Questioning.** Many participants stated trouble with figuring out their identity as a multiracial individual and questioned what they could do or identify as with that identity. Shanika exemplified that saying, "it's definitely been a struggle to figure out that identity." Anaya echoes that thought with nonchalance saying, "I still haven't really figured out what to disseminate as. I'm just kinda like, Yeah, this is what I am. Do with that information what you will, but I'm just gonna do my life." Meagan speaks in exasperation about periods of confusion and questioning with her identity while in school when discussing hot political topics of the time.

“I think with everything that’s been going on, it's been questioned by my own self a lot more than by others. I always feel like if I say something about what's going on, even though have strong feelings about, it's like there's going to be one person who's going to like “Meagan. That's wrong. Like, you're Black, you have to think this way” or “Meagan, you're completely right, you're White, you have to think this way”. And I think going along with the whole Black Lives Matter versus defund the police and all that, I don't agree with defunding the police and I don't agree with the violence and things like that that come with Black Lives Matter, even though I've done my research on both.”

The participants were faced with constant confusion with what they were to choose in accordance with their races. This confusion was not helped whenever they were forced to “pick one” in instances concerning demographic information collection and within society in general. Tired of constantly having to racially identify herself on hospital forms, Anaya would distance herself for identifying herself racially and just write “Human”. Stephanie spoke distastefully against having to “pick one”.

“Especially like those questionnaires. I'm not really a fan of where they asked you your ethnicity and they make you pick one. It's very hard to decipher which one to pick, because you feel like both of those are a big part of your identity.”

Fed up with having to choose, Meagan echoed Stephanie’s thoughts with confidence. Her voice carries a conviction in the belief that she should not be forced to choose one over the other.

“I always say I'm mixed. I'm mixed with Black and White. If there's a questionnaire, if it doesn't say at least mixed, biracial, or other, I won't put it out. I won't say anything because I don't feel like it's right for me to put one of the other. And other people who have said like “You should always say what your dad is”, like, no. I'm not just Black, I'm Black and White. So that's always what I say. Always. [So when something asks you to choose one over the other, you just don't participate?] Yes. [...] Going back, I think people want me, like mainly myself, I don't want to leave either part of me out. But going into, like, what's going on now, people are forcing me to ‘choose one or the other’, and I don't believe in that at all.”

The struggle the participants had with figuring out their identity was unaided by their parents. When Anaya was young, both her and her mother had trouble disseminating

what race choose when it came to school forms. Considering her mother is French, she said, “there's a little bit of a difference when it comes to that side, because there's a cultural difference not understanding completely American racism and American history.” Anaya continues by sharing about her mother’s struggle with “picking one” for her children on school lunch forms, and her dad not being around to help either.

“Even with my mom. So, in France, it's illegal to identify someone based off of their race when it comes to governmental paperwork or research. So, when she came here, she had to put down on like free or reduced lunch whether we were Black or White. And she didn't know what was supposed to go down there because she was like, you're both mixed. And you didn't have that box yet to put down mixed, other, or whatever you want to put down. And so, at first she put us down as White. She was like, [shrugs] “Well I don't know, I'm White. I guess..” People within administration within the elementary school– she's also a teacher there– came up to her like, “Hey, you can put your kids down as Black, and they get more money, they'll be able to eat more at the free reduced lunch.” And she was like “Oh okay, I'll just switch it.” And like I said, there wasn't anybody to really tell us what we were. My mom was so lost, and we were also lost. At least I was, I can't speak for my brother and my sister. And then my dad was always working out of town because his job was out of town. So we didn't really have as much of a relationship with that to get through that.”

Concerning parental insight on racial matters, Meagan had a hard time when it came to figuring out how to respond when the N-word was spoken around her. When going to her parents for help, she still felt lacking when it came to figuring it out.

“I can remember sometimes kids would sing songs and say, like, the N-word and things like that. Things that actually do affect me. I don't have the best relationship with my dad to like, be like, “Dad, how do you react when people say things like this?” because he's not going to give me a straight up answer, or like actually sit down and talk to me about it. My mom doesn't know one-hundred percent how to tell me, sooo I think anytime something like the N-word, hard-r or not, has anytime been said, which is pretty often, Or I'm looked at in a certain way.”

The researcher asked Stephanie if her parents were encouraging of the exploration of both of her races. In response, she just slightly shook her head, said that they were not encouraging of that, and that she should just blend.

“Not really too much. It was more of just, “Go with like... try to fit in and go with people, what they label you as. Because you don’t want to like, cause any disagreements or anything, or change how people look at you. You just want to fit in with everyone else.””

Kaitlyn speaks of her family and how she was unaware of one of her races until adulthood with a tone of disappointment due to missing out on that culture.

“So, my dad is actually White [laughs] and he grew up in Arizona. He lived in California for a little bit, but his family and my- that side of the family is pretty much all in Arizona. And he married my mom, who is half Puerto Rican and half Filipino, but it's kind of a weird situation because I didn't actually know that I was Puerto Rican until, like, my senior year of undergrad. So, I have like this weird identity with that where I didn't really get like... I feel like I'm catching up in regards to that part of myself. So, I got more exposed to the Filipino side of things. And even some of my family, when my grandpa originally came to the United States from the Philippines, he moved to Hawaii. So, I think parts of that kind of got into our culture, a little bit more too. So I learned more about that than I did my Puerto Rican side.”

When speaking with the researcher after the interview questions had concluded, Kaitlyn shared that her mother was not the one who disseminated the information to her of her Puerto Rican heritage, but that it was her Aunt who did. Kaitlyn told the researcher about how she joined groups centered around her Puerto Rican heritage and how she tried to learn more about it since her mother had not shown her anything to do with it.

**“What are you?”: Proving & Defending Races.** Repeatedly throughout the interviews, participants spoke about being asked the question “What are you?”, or times that people assumed them to be something other than what they are. This would then force to the participants into diving into their family dynamics and having to “prove” their claim to their races. Sometimes this would lead to people inquiring about their racial status and asking for the participants to speak the corresponding language if their race’s language differed from English.

Anaya, Torri, Shanika, Kaitlyn and Stephanie all felt this need to prove their claim while simultaneously feeling burdened by this need. Stephanie shared her annoyance when people don't believe her when sharing her ethnicity.

“Not a lot of people will believe that when you first tell them. I feel like I had to defend myself somewhat. Like, people will assume certain things about you instead of believing your identity to be your own. So, I feel like especially with Asian side, like I had to defend that and explain the origins of how I got here basically. Um, when I feel like sometimes you shouldn't have to. You shouldn't have to defend that. People should accept that of you. [Do you feel like sometimes you have to prove one of your cultures?] I would say so. Especially the Asian side. I feel like I have to prove that culture. And like, show them that I actually am, or explain how we got here, like how my family got here basically, instead of just believing it”

Shanika tells the researcher of the many times her race was mistaken. People would assume her race or question her relation with her mother and siblings.

“Growing up in Arizona, there are different cases. I mean, people think I'm everything [laughs]. I mean, I've gotten Native American. I've walked into stores and I'm like getting ready to go into the dressing room and they break out and they're speaking to me in Spanish. I'm just like [laughs], I don't speak Spanish very well, but okay, I'm not sure why you made that assumption. In doing dance and doing different things, and having different roles, it's just like, “Oh, are you Indian? Eastern Indian?” I don't know, I, I've had a lot of different mishaps in cases, whether it's been in dating or, just in general people. They're just like, “What are you?” Yeah, it's going and being like, “That's your mom? oh.” I mean, also, I guess with the fact of, you know, not necessarily having my dad in the picture. Or I mean you know even my siblings. I mean, we all look kind of different, our own different way and everything. And so, you know, going and being like, “Oh, you're related?” And whatnot. So, I mean, in that regard, yeah, I feel like there has had to be some quote unquote “verification”, so to speak, of like, what you are, because I guess a lot of the times, just based off of looking at me, I mean... When I walked across the stage to get my Bachelor's, the Dean who like, shakes your hand and everything. My grandparents gave me a lei, and on the stage, he's just like, “Are you Pacific Islander?” [Laughs] I was like “No, I just happen to be wearing a flower lei.” So, I mean, yeah, I would say that my race gets mistaken a lot, um, in regards to, I guess, how I look and everything.”

For Torri, when people would ask her about her race, they would counter her reply with, “Well, surely your dad's only, like, half or whatever.” She would then say, “No, my mom is just the lightest you can be without being albino [laughs].” This necessary

reassurance of her mother's complexion was because Torri's skin tone favored that of White.

Anaya's impatience with the "What are you?" question was evident when she told the researcher about her transformation of how she answers said question as she has grown up.

"But then I'd say over time, I just got tired of having to be asked, "What am I? What am I mixed with? Am I Indian? Like, what are you?", or being called half-breed or stuff like that. So over time, I would just put on the boxes, especially at the doctor's office thinking I was funny, I would just put down 'human' and just leave it at that. Like, just leave me alone. I was just kind of tired of it. And I went through that phase through middle school, and then through high school, I was just kind of like, "Yeah, I'm mixed. I'm half-White-half-Black." Just kind of like that. Then transitioning from high school to college, sometimes it's just easier to say Black. Yeah, if anybody asks, I'd tell them what I am, but other than that I kind of just identify as Black, just because of how people will perceive me as first, rather than furthermore, what it is. Um, so yeah, it's kind of depends I guess on what the scenario is. I feel like for the most part, people who see me in the world are going to see me as Black, or mixed with Black. Um, but yeah, I guess, like I still haven't like really figured out what to disseminate as. I'm just kind of like, yeah, "This is what I am, do with that information what you will, but I'm just gonna do my life." So yeah."

When the researcher asked Anaya if she had ever gone along with the race someone had labeled her as, she also expressed her discontent with the need to prove her race. She also expressed frustration with those who critiqued her ability to speak French.

"I remember one time at swim practice, somebody was like "Well you look Indian. Like you're not Black and White, you're probably Indian." Like, ah, no. No, I'm not. I'm like, [gestures] this is my mom. It's just something that sucks, having to constantly prove yourself. [...] You have to prove like yeah, [holds up her hands like she's holding a picture] this is my mom. This is my dad. This is who came together and this is me. [...] [Have you ever felt like you're able to claim the race you pass as more often than the other?] I guess, most people don't really like question it..? Just because- I obviously can't walk up to somebody and say, "Yeah I'm White." Like, they'll just kind of look at me like [speaks softly] "What the hell is she thinking??" Most the time I just say like, [shrugs] "Yeah, I'm Black", and they're like, "Yep. Acceptable." and so if I just want the conversation to end pretty quickly, it's like, "Yeah, I'm mixed" or "Yeah I'm Black", and it's just like [clicks tongue] that's it. I think most of the time if I'd say, "Yeah, Black" and it ends. Or if

I say, “Yeah, I’m mixed” the next question is “What are you mixed with?” and then you answer them like, [tone expresses going through the motions] “Yeah, I’m half Black half White. My dad’s from here. My mom’s from France.” And then conversation goes into more of being French, and the *nationality*, and can I speak the *language*, and have I ever *been there*. So, I guess I already know the rhythm, where the conversation is going to go. [...] So, I’d say when people are like, “Oh, you’re not really French.” And I, I get that a lot, just because I don’t look like a typical French person. But that’s like, what does a typical French person look like? [...] And I feel like from that aspect, I feel like most people would say, “Oh you’re not French.” And I have to prove it by speaking French, or sometimes people will be like, “Oh, well you’re French isn’t that good. Are you really sure you’re actually French?” I’ve gotten that from a lot of French professors like, “Oh, well, you’re just stupid yada yada yada.” I’m just like, [sarcastically] “Oh! Great! [two thumbs up and smiles] love this!” But um, yeah, it’s that having to prove whether or not I’m French. Which is more of a nationality, rather than an actual race.”

Kaitlyn, like Anaya, was also expected to speak the language, and even “share something cool” about her culture. Kaitlyn felt that the “What are you?” question was “inevitable” and that she was inadequate.

“I feel like immediately after anybody knew what my... when they asked me, you know that inevitable question of “What are you?” you know, and I explained to them what my racial background was. I feel like there would always be questions of, have I ever been there? Do I speak like Spanish? Do I speak whatever language Filipinos speak? Do I, you know, have anything cool to share with them? Like food or a word or something like that. And I always felt inadequate, because I didn’t know. I didn’t feel like I ever knew enough.”

“What are you?” sparked a range of emotions in the participants, primarily annoyance and impatience concerning those who questioned if they’re telling the truth and ask for further verification.

**Desire for Acceptance & Fitting In.** While in school, the participants all spoke of the concept of “fitting in” in one way or another. They showed a desire to be accepted within social groups, but the multiracial individuals often found themselves out of place within monoracial groups. Meagan shared a time that exemplifies this marginal status and



lack of acceptance within two different friend groups while in high school and the anxiety that came along with that.

“So, I grew up with a lot of ‘White friends’, a lot of White, rich friends. And I think sometimes going over there, it's like I'm not going to be able to like fit in sometimes. That will be my immediate thought meeting someone else. I'll be like, “Are they going to only pay attention, or not like me, because I'm mixed or Black? Because of the one drop rule. And then if I go to my Black friend's house, which I don't really have that many of those, which is kind of sad. But if I do go over there its always like, “Gosh Meagan, like you're boujee. You act White.””

Similar to Meagan's feelings of not fitting in, Shanika spoke of the feeling of “not being good enough for either party” when it came to trying to find somewhere she belonged.

“And, as far as trying to fit into someone else's mold and everything, you know, I definitely felt the tension sometimes as far as, you know, “Oh I'm, I'm not from the hood, so I'm not Black enough” or, you know, “my skin isn't dark enough or light enough to fit that mold” and everything, but I mean, I would say that just the fact of who I am and everything you know wouldn't be good enough for either party.”

Participants often spoke of instances where they felt like they were the only one like them depending on the situation they found themselves in. While not the only multiracial specifically, usually they spoke of being one of very few racial minorities in general. Rachael shares a story of wanting to relate to someone and not being able to.

“I, I don't think I ever met anyone, outside of my chapter that was Hispanic, that was active in FFA, or ever came out to events. And I felt really isolated, because I would always want to be like, “Oh my God, this reminds me of something that I did with my mom!” Or something that I did back in Mexico with my grandma, or something I saw in Mexico, because I do go to Mexico frequently because my grandparents are there. So, um... and I could never relate it to anybody but myself. Um, so that was kind of hard too.”

Shanika and Torri share with the researcher that they were one of, if not the *only*, Black kids in their FFA chapters. Kaitlyn also shared that she and her sister were the only

non-White students in their chapter as well. Anaya also spoke of being in situations where she was one of few minorities present at a conference while in college. She states:

“With AFA, we have these racial talks that we have to have like to improve our cultural understanding and our cultural scale. I remember like being at their leader's conference that they have, and it's like 1000 plus students that are there. And then you have 800 industry professionals that are there. And out of all those people, they had 35 Black people. So, out of 2000 people you have 30ish?? And then you had maybe the same amount of Hispanics and that's it? So, I was in a really uncomfortable space. So, I feel like in those situations I'm just more quiet and reserved. Just trying to take in everything.”

When speaking of their struggles with acceptance and fitting in, four of the participants said the exact same phrase. This phrase often used in the United States is “too White for the Black kids, and too Black for the White kids.” Meagan, Shanika, Torri, and Isaac all used this phrase when speaking about their identity. It also happened that they are all Black/White as well. When Meagan spoke of her identity, she used the phrase to explain her struggle as a mixed person.

“So it's always like the quote “too White for the Black kids, but too Black for the White kids.” Like, I think that explains everything. So, yeah. It's, I think it's something I still struggle with being places, because I am really light, I think. I'm really light for a mixed person.”

Shanika also uses this phrase after describing the races of her parents. Even though she identifies solely as a Black woman, the phrase was still something she dealt with.

“And so, my mom is Black, and my dad is White, and I primarily identify with being a Black woman, I would say. Um, as far as things go you know, it's one of those things where, being mixed and everything, I've dealt with, you know, either or. It's like, “Oh, you're too White to be Black, or too Black to be White.”

When Torri used the phrase, she spoke of lacking her peer's acceptance. This was because she didn't 'look' like the Black girls with her fair skin, and she didn't 'act' like the White girls, leaving her in this weird middle ground. Isaac spoke of “the struggle” growing up multiracial and using this phrase to describe it more accurately.

“I think the biggest struggle...is not really finding the balance being Black and White. It's when you're growing up, and the saying goes “too White for the Black kids, too Black for the White kids.” That's always the struggle from once you're being brought up”

The participants stated various incidents in which they were, or were not, included into social groups due to one or more of their races. Shanika, who identifies as a Black woman, spoke of being excluded by her Black peers with a hint of sorrow in her voice, while trying to act like it didn't bother her.

“I took African American dance classes and did different things and whatnot, and you know, I just found that in attending some of the different things there with the Black groups there, they weren't as inclusive of me per se and everything. And so that part was kind of, you know, a struggle in that sense, but I tried to hold my own [gives a short laugh].”

She also shared of other experiences in college where she was not included in everyday activities.

“In grad school, I was the only one who didn't have an office. So, there were cases where I would go and I would show up for class, and I mean I didn't live on campus, so I would have like, you know 45-minute drive to get to campus and park and do that and stuff. And so, I'm just like, you know, it's, it's the morning struggle [laughs]. But, trying to get the class and then show up and nobody would be there. And so, you know, purposeful or not, they weren't inclusive to me and everything. That being said to you know, I was left off the newsletter, for the department like multiple times in the case where they were talking about grad students and what they're doing for AgEd.”

Shanika continued by saying that she'll never forget what happened, but that she can't let every single thing like that bother her and that she must “continue on”. Likewise, Anaya also shared of a moment that she was not included while in college. She was a part of Agriculture Future of America (AFA), a club that Anaya shared was predominantly White. She tells the researcher of what would happen during breaks while referencing the majority.

“They're just kind of like, they just kind of all come together. Almost as if they've known each other for a long time. And some of them are friends, but every time that we could go on for a break, it was like all of them come together and nobody else was able to come in. It was just kind of myself, the other Black person, and the Asian would always just hang out. Or we would be able to talk or have dinner together, just because that's who we felt was most comfortable with. But everybody else was like “Come in together! Like, we say we want to be inclusive, but we're not actually doing that!””

Shanika felt similarly to Anaya when attending an alumnus meeting at her own university and feeling unwelcomed, although this group was majority Black.

“There are times where I would go to the different scholarship meetings that I would have for the [University] Black Alumni, and you walk in and they're just talking, talking, talking. And you ask, “Hey, can I sit here?” and they're just like, “yeah.” and then they just don't talk to you.”

When speaking with Stephanie, the researcher asked what would make her feel welcomed into a group of people of one of her races. Her answer was quite simple.

“Just being inclusive. Because both groups will make any assumptions about you, no matter if you're in the White or Asian room, they're both going to make assumptions about like your background and all that. But I feel like just being inclusive and understanding, because you really never know where students or anybody has come from in their past. You can only make first impressions and get to know them better before you make assumptions.”

Speaking of assumptions, participants mentioned monoracial stereotypes throughout the interviews. These stereotypes made them feel like they were not “typical” people of their races, thus not fitting in. These stereotypes were inflicted by both the community around them and by themselves. While Shanika was in high school and thinking about colleges and majors, she would share her intentions to other Black people, and in turn receive negative feedback for her choices that were “atypical”.

“I feel like part of the other issue that I would say that I had as well, is a lot of the times, if I shared with other Black people what I was going to school for, and everything you know, there is definitely a reaction or opinions based off of, you know, “Oh, you're going into something with agriculture.” And so they would tie that into slavery. Or they would tie that into you know, the current issues of

agriculture today, like their opinions of GMOs and how they're poisonous to people and stuff. And, you know, there would be that tension of being like, "Oh, well you know well educated Black people typically go for 'this' degree and everything versus going for something else." And so that in that regard, it kind of felt, you know, okay. You know, I'm not majoring in the typical thing that other people would major in. [...] And again, as far as things go, my major and bringing that up in a crowd of Black people, they're just like, "Well, why aren't you going into something like liberal arts or political science or pharmacy or something else" and so, basically just being dismissive of, you know, what I'm trying to pursue. There are different cases where it's like, "Okay. Obviously, I'm not what these Black professors or these, you know, higher Black authority people are looking for necessarily, because I'm not doing I guess, 'typical' African American things"

Torri felt atypical as well, although her feelings were more towards the area that she lives in and compared to those who live in that area.

"Sometimes I don't feel like I'm being what this area deems as "an appropriate White person", because I'm just like [tries to assure the researcher] I'm not liberal, I think I'm more moderate when it comes to thinking, maybe progressive. I don't know. My husband likes to say "You're a liberal" and [...] I don't think that I always fit in in this area."

Earlier in the interview, Torri had unknowingly shared the stereotype that the students at her school held of "Black people having to date other Black people". This stereotype came out when Torri's peers asked her about her dating life.

"Most of the African American kids that went to school with me were my cousins. So, people are always like, "Why are you not dating Black people if you're a Black person?" Like, because they're all [laughs] related to me and I'm not into that."

**Assimilation and Code Switching.** Throughout the interviews, every single one of the participants spoke of instances where they had to assimilate or use code switching to "fit in". Torri gives an example of the many accents she was exposed to, and her struggle with them growing up, while also learning how to code switch back and forth when needed.

"I know that... and this is maybe part of my own implicit bias, per se, but I have had to figure out when to turn it off and turn it on, if that makes sense. Like, you know there's stereotypes on both sides of White and Black. And then there's just

the culture and there's how people talk. And on my Black side, my family is from the Chattanooga-Georgia line, so that accent sounds like this Black southern belle, and it's a different type of thing. And so, I grew up around that. And so, my dad, my dad kind of has it a little bit too. And then my mom, you know, she grew up in HR, so she's super proper. She's the only daughter of four that went to college. So, she's got sort of this, not necessarily proper tone, but it's very professional, very business-like. And of course, I grew up in country. You got this whole country thing going on and you got all these little identities kind of mixing together.”

Similarly, Anaya speaks of code switching when having to go into professional settings. For Anaya, this switching is easy, and assimilation has become almost natural for her.

“Like, there of course will always be code switching. That will occur whenever I'm in professional settings, or whenever I'm hanging out with like my friends. More relaxed and more chill. But I guess I don't really think about it as much. [...] I also don't think about it as much, because I've just kind of had to be in that mode for so long. It's easy for me to switch over. Like, if this is in a certain scenario like, “this is how I need to act in order to get this internship”. Or switch over like this is “I'm in a safe space, like I can be who I want to be like, it's all good.” Or if I don't understand the dynamics of what's going on I just try to ask normal, try to seem like I work like they do and work from there. Kind of assimilate in some areas, and other areas stick out like a sore thumb, because that's all that I can do! And yeah.”

Later on, Anaya spoke of her struggle with getting to college and being considered “aggressive” when challenging people's thoughts, and how she had to change to change to make them feel more comfortable.

“So, I just sometimes have to remember different... like what environment I am in, and how do I need to act in a certain way to get the outcome I would need. Or the answers to the questions I am asking without seeming like I'm going to attack them. So, how can I create a safer space for other people without seeming like I am going to put them in a box?”

Kaitlyn also shared similar experiences in which she “went with the majority”. She shared with the researcher about general experiences of having to highlight parts of herself depending on who she's with, as well as just not bringing up being different.

“I feel like I couldn't tell the difference about what was me and what wasn't at that point. But yes, I think a lot of times I put parts of me aside to go with the majority,

just because it was easier, and it was the thing that I could connect with other people on. [...] I feel like I'm probably a master of that by now. Just because depending on who you're with, you just, I guess, highlight those parts of yourself. When I'm with people who are Filipino, I like to talk about the things that I know in that regard. When I'm with my friends who are Puerto Rican I, more so listen in that regard. But I'm more fascinated with all the things that are part of that culture and I don't, I kind of ignore the other two. And then when I am in a predominantly White community, I just don't really bring up being different. [Do you feel like also had that ability in high school as well?] I think it started there, because I just became an expert at hiding those other things. And so, I think over time gotten better at acknowledging, and maybe doing that more so within, you know, those other two racial identities. But originally, very good at doing it within you know my White racial identity.”

When the researcher asked Stephanie if she had ever been forced to leave one of her racial identities behind, she answered similarly to Kaitlyn in that she was not ‘forced’, but she did feel pressured to do so.

“I don't think I've ever had one of those experiences where I was forced to, I think mine was more by choice and kind of peer pressure, but still had that choice of if I want to bring both sides in. [What kind of peer pressure made you feel like you had to?] I guess the kind of peer pressure to fit in with everyone else. Because my high school was, I think it was mainly White honestly. So, when you saw everyone else around you, you kind of just want to fit in. The pressure of just like, just put one race, don't put both.”

As Rachael spoke about her possession of multiple races, she seemed to also feel that same pressure as Stephanie, and “switched” who she was depending in the situation she found herself in like Kaitlyn had.

“I remember back in high school, my Hispanic friends would always call me “fake” [awkwardly smiles in remembrance] and say like, “Oh, when you're with your FFA friends, you act a certain way. When you are, when you're with us, you act a certain way.” And I never really thought about it until I got to college when I was like “Well, I do that to make each of you all, each group, feel comfortable. Even though I'm not comfortable myself.”

A few moments later, Rachael speaks of switching who she was and how she acted depending on her environment, signaling each switch with a snap of her fingers.

“I would, I would never speak Spanish [the agricultural center]. And when I would walk in the building, it just seemed like a switch [snaps fingers] had turned on, and I was like, “Okay, [snaps] be White.” And then when I'd leave and go back to [School], I'd be like “Okay, [snaps] be Hispanic.” When I would walk into my house, [snaps] “Be Hispanic.”

To be deemed ‘professional’ while running for state office, Isaac told a story of how he had to change the way he looked so that he could have a “full fair chance” at receiving a position. He speaks with a hint of sadness and disappointment, while also facing the reality of the situation.

“I remember I had not cut my hair for about four years, all through FFA I had long, curly hair. I knew that I had to talk to my advisor about this at some point whenever I went to interview for state office. Because we, without saying it, we both knew what I had to do. Because, if I wanted a full fair chance and with no other, you know... If I wanted to interview for state office, I wanted the best chance that I could get. And I didn't want anything silly, to ruin those chances. If that meant that I had ‘too radical hair’ or not. Because there's definitely been in the past and in [State] FFA where, even if it's just a girl, if she has her hair in a certain way, they don't like it. So I definitely know if a Black man has his hair looking like, you know, natural curly Black men hair, they probably won't be too, I guess, alert to that. They wouldn't really like to see that. So, I definitely cut my hair to give myself the best chance. And a lot of times I always had to think about what I would- how I present myself a lot.”

On another note, Torri shared the upside of these assimilative tendencies in the fact that, because of her multiracial identity, she can figure out “where you stand” and “what your prerogative is”.

“Being in this position and being the way that I look, and who I am, and who identify as, has given me sort of, I guess, a superpower, in the fact that I can figure out what your prerogative is before I ask you about it [...] Or where they stood on like the racial, prejudicial spectrum before they would realize that they were telling me. And that would kind of set the tone for how I would go about that conversation. And kind of tell me, “Okay, I can let my flags fly, or I need to bring one down a notch, or completely hide one.”

Some of the individuals also had drawbacks to assimilation. In the literature, certain individuals regard “acting White” as disloyalty to one’s group (Portes & Zhou, 1993). This



was often stated verbally from the participants of this study. Meagan hesitated to run for chapter officer because she didn't feel like that's "what a Black person would do".

"I met some people when I came into FFA, and they were like "you should apply for an officer position." I was like, I don't think I can do that. Typically that's not really like what "people like me" do, and by that I mean, like, the Black people."

Additionally, Meagan struggled all through high school with people saying that she acted too White, or not White enough. The FFA kids told her to "act Whiter", all whiel her Black friends said she was "boujje" because she acted *too* White. She shared about her upbringing with the researcher while obtaining this almost sad tone the longer she spoke.

"I grew up with my dad not in the house. My mom raised me my whole life. With no help. I've always been more around my grandparents on both sides. But I think, I think with being raised with a White mother, it's going to, I'm going to have that be an influence on me right now. [...] she obviously had an influence on who I am. Growing up, she would even say herself to some people, I act White, or I am "White presented" That's just who I am. Presented as White. And I don't think that way, but it'll always be that way."

While in high school, Isaac was also accused of "acting White" and the negative connotation that had on his education. His voice gave an air of frustration as he recounted the story to the researcher.

"People always like to connect being educated with White. So me, always being able to articulate myself, always being able to have good grades, writing well and just being smart in general, I was not looked at as an educated Black kid. I was looked at as a Black kid who was trying to act White. But being educated to signify education as being something to only be available to White people was kinda like...it was definitely a huge slap in the face."

Anaya shared of when she first arrived at her HBCU after being in an all-White high school with rigorous demands, and how her habits made her seem "boujje" to her peers.

"I express myself as I am and let other people disseminate what they want to know, or what they want to assume about me. Because when I first got [to the HBCU] a lot of people assumed that I was boujje and stuck up because I did my work. I

always ask questions and I always challenge people's thoughts. I would talk about different research studies.”

**Acceptance of Identity.** Even though there were questions about their identity, some of the participants ended up with an acceptance of who they are as a multiracial individual, or were at least on the path to that acceptance.

Anaya used to be very aware of what other people wanted her to be. When she was young, she wanted to fit it in so much that she wanted to change her outer appearance so that she would look exactly like everyone else (i.e. her White peers). She then shares of how her viewpoint changed after she accepted herself exactly as she is and how she wanted to be her most genuine self.

“For the most part, it's like “This is who I am. Like, I can still be this person. This is who I need to work on. Can't be anybody else.” and then going from there. And then it's like, from now, it's just kind of like, I don't necessarily want to change FOR someone. Like I feel like fitting a mold for somebody else isn't going to work. And like I've tried to help other people like change for the better and like that doesn't work either. Like that person has to change for themselves. So I'd say like, from the aspect of someone else wanting me to be certain way, like, I think that's weird. I don't know. Like, I get like really off vibes of like “Mmm, doesn't seem like a good scenario.” If somebody is like “Yeah, I'll give you a million bucks if you act like this for me” then I'm like “ahh, a million bucks is nice, but..” like, that's kind of, I don't know. It just, it doesn't seem authentic, and that's kind of, I'm always the type of person who like, wants to be genuine. It's like, I want other people to feel comfortable and vulnerable around me so that they can be their authentic selves.”

Meagan adds to that by saying, “No, I'm not just Black, I'm Black and White. So that's always what I say. Always [...] I always make sure like “This is who I am. This is all of me. That's what's going to be.”” This was in reference to having to choose between her races.

Kaitlyn did not consider herself to be the most knowledgeable about her cultures as she wished, but she showed great pride in her ethnicities and showed acceptance of her

multiracial identity while replying to the researcher's question asking if she ever felt like she wasn't "doing it right" regarding one or more of her races.

"So, it's just balancing things, and making sure that you feel right with yourself and that you're proud of who you are and all of those different things. And understanding that I can be proud to be Filipino, and I can be proud to be Puerto Rican, but I can't possibly know what it's like to be only that, and to grow up with the prejudice and even all of the beauties of that culture, because that's not me. And that's not my identity. But still playing a supporting role in that. And then honoring my own self, that I do have my own foothold in that, and I can honor that, I can be proud to be those things."

While Isaac does not identify as multiracial, he proudly identifies monoracially as a Black man. He speaks of being proud in who you are and coming to peace with that.

"It's okay to be Black. It's okay to be Hispanic. It's okay to be Asian. You don't have to be White in [County] to prosper in school. You don't have to put on that mask. You don't have to do- you don't have to appropriate, you don't have to appease anybody, because you can just be yourself. And that's all that should be there is yourself. [...] But at the end of the day, when you become confident in yourself, in your culture, you realize that's what you really want to be. You want to be what you are. You want to be Black. You want to be Hispanic. You want to be Asian. You don't want to be something that you're not."

The conversation moved on, but after a while Isaac later came back to the subject with conviction. When speaking, it was as if he was trying to help another person figure out their own identity.

"You're really trying to figure out which one do you fit in with, and realistically it's, I mean it comes down to who are you comfortable with as yourself. And that's beyond White, Black, Hispanic, everything else. Who are you are comfortable with as, like, Well, who am I, as Isaac comfortable with? Who is, you know, John Hancock comfortable with? But after, you know, it takes couple years. It takes some years and some soul searching to figure out where you fall into that play. Where do you fall in. [...] After you really figure it out, you find what your values are, what your morals are, and regardless your values and morals won't ever change and what you identify with won't ever change either. And if people try to tell you otherwise, well, they can just talk."

Another reason fueling the use of a monoracial identity was the pride in the race. Shanika shares, “I identify with [being a Black woman] and I feel that I definitely have dealt with the struggles that accompany identifying myself as that as well.”

Once the participants expressed their confidence in who they were and what they identified as, the researcher noticed that the tone of their conversations seemed to reflect an increase in confidence as they continued to talk about their identities. That confidence was very clear compared to when they spoke of trying to navigate their identities within their lives and social circles when they were younger.

**Educating Others.** When it came to racial matters, Anaya and Isaac found themselves burdened with the task of “educating” those around them. Anaya said it was “weird” because “in some instances, it's like they want you to teach them about like understanding about racism” regarding being in a group of White people in college. Anaya found this burden to be very heavy, particularly in high school, and the burden was relieved when attending an HBCU.

“But yeah, I was always a constant thing of having to explain to people what racism is. And it sounds stupid, but we had senior superlatives, and I was nominated as “the most woke person” of my class, and I was just like, I don't want to be called that. But, yeah, it just because I was always the type of person to try to educate others about like, whatever it was. Environmental justices, racial injustices. It's just constant so that other people can learn for themselves, and from that aspect, it got very draining. And then coming to an HBCU, you don't really have to do that. Everybody, for the most part, you have people who have different ideas, and you can just have those conversations with them, and respect where they're coming from. But yeah, for the most part it was- from high school was like ‘fend for yourself survival’. And college everybody's on the same page. You don't have like... we all understand racial injustice, as we are all for the most part, Black.”

After sharing his annoyance about the misconceived notion that education is only available to White people, as mentioned earlier, Isaac shares a similar frustration as Anaya.

“And you know, hopefully, once we come to a time to realize that race is really just a concept then, you know, life would be good. But that's not the reality we live in. So, I do have to remind myself a lot of times, that there are definitely good White people around, especially like being around my family. But sometimes, there are times that like, they do things that frustrate me, and I have to really try my best to help educate them more.”

### *The FFA Culture*

The FFA is an organization, or club, that has programs designed to encourage students' interest in agricultural careers through activities including: career development events, awards programs, scholarships and leadership programs (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). The participants shared their experiences in FFA, and the researcher found many commonalities within those experiences.

This theme of The FFA Culture is because the participants stated experiences specific to the culture surrounding the FFA that is not necessarily transferable to other parts of their lives. The subthemes of the Advisor, White Leadership and Hard work for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and the Ag “norm” are all specific to this youth organization.

**The Advisor.** All the participants shared about their advisors, and the good and bad experiences that came along with them. Rachael, Anaya, Torri, and Stephanie all shared about wanting opportunities within FFA, and continuously being left short even after asking for them. Anaya shared of how she was left to fend for herself regarding competitions, and how some of that may have been due to her race.

“I would continuously ask for opportunities, and then they would kind of half-assed send stuff to me and not really allow me to grow within it. And I would ask for an opportunity within plant and soil sciences, because that's what I was interested in, and they would send me a competition, and that was it. Like, they wouldn't help me through it. There was no preparation. I didn't like... what was I supposed to do? I would pay for my membership and was like, “All right, I'm gonna learn about agriculture, this is great!” And it wouldn't take off. And then I would get other people to join FFA, and then they would get all the opportunities. And it was like..

they were all White. So I was just, I don't know. I didn't want to be like, "Yeah, it's because the color of my skin", but that was the only thing that was different. I would continue to write great emails trying to be a part of it, and it just...it didn't translate."

Meagan told the researcher of the diversity of her chapter, and how her advisor and other advisors would come together speak about her and other minority kids at FFA events. Meagan also said this was confirmed by an advisor in another county.

"Typically, around here, [my agriculture center] was the only diverse chapter. There's maybe one or two Black kids in our entire region, other than myself, that I can remember. So, you always get those looks. And I think, going back to the advisors, going into those events, like the quiz bowl and things like that, where it's your whole entire region, I can see other advisors talking to my advisors and kind of just like, looking at you, and then be like, "What do you do with those kids?" Being involved in FFA, like I said, I was super involved. So, going in those classrooms and going back with the advisors, you knew that once they got together you were going to be talked about. You knew it 100%. They weren't worried about the kids who were doing great, who were doing terrible. They were just like, "You've got these Black kids, like that's so random. We don't have any of that." We actually had another advisor from another county come into our chapter, and he kind of made it known that other advisors talked about us. So that...was heartbreaking. But also, like I said, I'm not gonna let it bother me."

Later in the conversation, Meagan also spoke about how when kids were passing around racist memes on the bus at National FFA Convention, she didn't feel like she could tell her advisors because they wouldn't have done anything about it.

As the researcher asked Rachael about her relationship with her advisors, she shared about how she never felt like she had an advisor that liked her. Rachael also mentioned how they never helped her with anything, just like Anaya.

"I got along with them pretty well, and they seem to get along with me. But once, like I said before, once I got just a committee position, it completely switched. They wouldn't stay after school with me to go over speeches. When I would ask for help, they would give me really blunt answers and not really go into depth about how they would help, how they could help me succeed. Not only in a competition, but just in general, like in classes or whatever it may have been. My junior year, it got really, really bad. I, I didn't have like... I feel like most people at a chapter, they kind of have a favorite advisor, a go-to advisor they go to even for stuff outside of FFA. Um, and I didn't have that. I didn't think that any of the others really liked me,

and they, they would purposely tell my other teammates, my officer teammates, about events. And they would get, they would be invited to it, but they would never invite me, even if I was Vice-President of my chapter. And they would single me out on stuff too.”

Lack of support from advisors was also evident when Stephanie spoke about her decision to run for state office.

“My other advisor, we still, we still texts and stuff sometimes, but she wasn't as encouraging. Especially when I decided to run for state office. She wasn't too encouraging for that experience, but my other advisor was. So, she just wasn't the most encouraging at some points, but she will always be there for students if needed.”

Torri, a current ag educator, told the researcher about her career goals in high school, and the conversation between her and her advisors about the decision to become an ag educator herself.

“At first I thought I was gonna be a horse trainer. Then I thought “I'll be a marine biologist”. But then I was like, “I kind of like what we're doing with FFA and I wanna keep doing it”, and BOTH of my advisors were like, “Don't do it”. As an advisor now, I could not ever tell a student don't do what I think is probably one of the most amazing professions and jobs out there, but they both told me to not to do it. Of course, I'm sort of a rebel at heart, so if you tell me I can't do something, guess who's going to do it? Me. [laughs] Um, so I told my closest advisor “I'm going to sit in your desk one day.” [laughs and gets high pitched] and I'm doing it now!” [...] [Did they ever give you a reasoning why not to go into the ag profession?] I actually work with him now, so I get to come and pester him, but he kind of gave me a little insight into that, and I think it's because he thought I would do something “better”. Within the profession, but as something as what he thought as “better”.”

On the other hand, Isaac, Rachael, Meagan, and Shanika all shared of the fast amount of support received from specific advisors during their endeavors in FFA. Isaac shared of the close relationship he had with his advisor throughout high school, and how that relationship meant so much to him.

“So my freshman year, I was front seat every day, I was always in my ag teacher's ear. And my ag teacher was a very- his name was [Name], he was probably one of the most, you know, helping people. He's definitely one of the most monumental people my life, just because he helped me in ways I can't even, you know, put to

words. Because that was, I can confidently say that that was one of the very few times in my life that I was treated by another individual as Isaac, not as a Black kid, not as someone with a certain last name. It was very teacher to student relationship. I was just treated as 'my teacher wanted to see the best out of me', regardless of what it was. And it's as long as I was willing to do that work, then he was willing to put, invest more into me. So, my freshman year we made, [laughs] we made a bet actually, because I always had like, designs in my hair every now and then. I had a lot of just crazy hairstyles. So, I said if I had won state for FFA in public speaking, then I would get to cut his hair and put some lines in it. And needless to say, I ended up winning state, and then I got to do that."

Later in the interview, he is speaking of his prominence within FFA, and how his passion spurred him so far, and that he wanted to bring these opportunities into the Black community. He does this by mentioning the relationship between him and his advisor.

"I'm an agriculture education major now because of that. Because my teacher was able to impact me. And it wasn't just because, you know, it was a Black-White relationship or anything like that. It was solely just because he showed me what it could be like to have someone that just wants to see other people succeed. And whenever FFA is done right, I think that it's a very beautiful thing to see that."

When speaking with Rachael, she shares of when she received a new incoming advisor, and his support after having seven other not-so-supportive advisors, as mentioned earlier. While speaking of this new advisor, the gratefulness in her tone was undeniable.

"My senior year, um, that's when I got [advisor], and he was absolutely amazing. and right off the bat he was like, "You have potential, and no one here has tapped into it. And I'm going to be the one to tap into it, or kind of hear your story, and what you want to do." He never forced me to do anything. He never was like, "Oh, because you're an officer, you have to do this." It was more like "You're going to do really well in this, and I want you succeed in it, and you know if you don't, it was a learning experience." He got me to run for state office, he coached me in Extemporaneous Speaking and I went on. That was my first state competition doing by myself. So, I didn't really have that sense of like, "Oh, I love my advisors and my advisors love me" until my senior year and that was only with one, not the eight advisors that I had."

Likewise, Meagan spoke of when she also had an advisor come into her chapter her senior year, which changed the dynamic of her school completely, and how he took. Burden off her shoulders.



“He also fought better for people like me and [friend] and the other biracial or minority kids in our FFA group together, because we had a huge one. So, he was – like I said, we had many students for half a day, every day– so, even when I wasn't there, going back to my home school, I knew that I wouldn't have to worry about any younger kids, or worry about any of my friends or anything like that.”

**White Leadership and Hard Work for Equality.** Over and over, the researcher found instances within the participants' experiences where racial minority leadership within FFA was not favorable. Consistently, participants mentioned how White leadership was what was favored in the higher ranks (i.e., President, Vice-President), both at the local chapter level, as well as at the National level. Rachael exemplified this in her testimony regarding her moving up in the ranks at her chapter.

“And then once I started to gain ‘power’, I guess you could say, or in a leadership position. [My advisors] we're like, “Okay. I don't know what to do now. She's going to rise above everybody else, and we don't want that. We always want a White presence, whether it be male or female, to be the representation of our chapter.” [...] And when I would... for regional office and for state office, the panels weren't really diverse, and they all kind of had the same value, and the value was ‘White’. It wasn't diverse, so they kind of took away opportunities for me in that sense as well.”

Meagan was in the same chapter as Rachael, although they were in different grades. Meagan shared with the researcher of an incident when another member shared with her their thoughts on Rachael becoming part of the leadership of their chapter.

“I think one thing- Rachael is obviously Hispanic. Fluent in Spanish one hundred percent. She made that known in our school. More people were willing to come up to me and talk to me and say things like, “I don't want to have a Mexican President. I don't want to do that.””

When it came to leadership within the national level of FFA, Shanika shared of an incident with her, her White teammate, and someone affiliated with National FFA during National Convention while walking down the side walk.

“There was the case when we went back to the National Convention and I was walking with one of my teammates who was White and a male. And there was a

national FFA person who went and stopped us. And he just asked my teammate, “Hey, are you a national officer? Because you look like national officer material” and it's just like, really?? There's just things that would pop up, and it's just like... I'm literally right here. But again, I feel like, you know, FFA in general and [State] FFA, there seemed to be a pretty heavy trend of always having a White male in the leadership position. I was the state treasurer.”

Later in the interview, she speaks on how the roles of her state officer team were divvied up, and how the President seemed to have a different role, and how the traits for that position were different than the others.

“At different times, just because the President had more roles or responsibilities to be different places and everything, that part seemed like a little bit unbalanced. Because a lot of the times it was us team members going and doing a lot of the work, but he was the one making the appearances and being a White male, you know? That kind of felt tense sometimes, as far as going and navigating your way throughout FFA, it's just like, okay, so we obviously have an idea that “that's what a leader looks like”. It wasn't the actual traits or anything, or the background and the story.”

When it came to looking at the FFA through the lens of a minority, Isaac shared of how he taught fellow members to see FFA how he saw it through his lens, and how he sees things that they don't notice.

“I have friends that taught me how to weld, and then I taught them the other side of things. Like how to see the world a little bit differently. How to, kind of, see how certain things within the ag world. Because I know the biggest thing has always been diversity and talking about how can we bring in more diverse roles into agriculture and things like that. And I would always tell them when we're at convention stuff, I'm like “Look around and tell me what's, you know, of color?” There's nobody that's in leadership of color. There's nobody in the expos. You don't have anybody to feel identified with. And doing those just little things it was really cool to have, you know... a lot of their worlds were culture shocked because most of them lived in the smaller parts of [City].”

When it came to receiving leadership positions, or receiving anything in general, Rachael, Shanika, and Isaac all share of how they had to put forth extra effort just to be considered. Even having the chance of being seen as equal to their White counterparts

required hard work. Rachael shared about this struggle to be equal to her White chapter president with the researcher, and how desperately she wanted it.

“I saw all the opportunity she got; she had gotten. And I work so much harder than her. I would go to every single event. She would never stay. She never went to events. And it just seemed like everything was handed to her even though she did nothing. And so I worked extra hard to be able to... be looked at, be given opportunity...and to even be considered as President of my chapter the following year.”

Shanika had a similar situation where she was passed up for a Presidential or Vice-Presidential chapter position. She spoke with disappointment how she did so much for the chapter, yet she was passed up for the opportunity because she was “unmarketable”.

“That part to me seemed really unfair at the time because it was just like, I've been involved. I've been going to the events. I've been competing. I've been attending leadership conferences and whatnot. And, you know, I got an interview and whatnot and thought, hey, this is going to be the year where you know I get the chance to be a leader and I can you know take this chapter that is very small and go ahead and turn it into something bigger and have that piece of, you know, being in that leadership position. And I mean, as far as things go, I was the one doing all the recruitment. I was the one who was attending junior high school nights and middle school nights at different schools all across [City], bringing my own animals with me. I made a display board. I made pamphlets, you know. I was, [laughs] I was the one trying to market the program, but I was deemed “unmarketable” and so I didn't get that position. So I would definitely say that yes, in that regard, looking specifically at my chapter...that part didn't really seem any more inclusive or supportive of diversity, either.”

When the researcher first asked about Isaac's high school life, he spoke of his pursuit of FFA as well as other sports and clubs, but also about his hard work for recognition within those.

“So for me, high school experience, yes it was fun. I was in sports. I was in FFA, and different clubs. But I mean every day, it felt like [stumbles for words]... it didn't help being Black. Because being Black means that, you know, you have to work twice as hard just to get half as much. So, doing that while also fighting against, you know, not having that name, not being related to the right families, it was definitely a very hard thing for me. But it also cultivated me in to the person I am, because it made me determined, and made me hungry. Made me want to like be a

step ahead of everybody. I want to be able to, you know, create that distance between everybody around me.”

**Diversity and Inclusion.** Many of the participants mentioned living in very rural areas that lacked much, if any, diversity while they were in high school. This lack of diversity in their high schools then translated to lack of diversity in their chapters as well. Shanika spoke of being the only Black kid within her chapter where the majority was White, and how that was lonely.

“Based off of where I live, like I said, the population at my school, it’s not exactly like there’s a whole group of us who hang out together or whatever. And I mean, same thing in being in FFA and being in 4-H. I was pretty much, you know, in my county like, the only one, so to speak. And so, it’s not like there is a Black group of kids or students to go and hang out with and identify with and bond with. And so, it’s just constantly being immersed in the Caucasian side of the community and stuff.”

Later in the conversation, Shanika speaks of FFA’s diversity, and how she did not see a big emphasis put on diversity within the FFA when there should have been.

“With FFA, I don’t really feel like [State] FFA specifically was extremely pushing for the diversity aspect of things. I was the first Black officer for [State] FFA. But it wasn’t like that was a trademark thing. It wasn’t a fun fact that they put on their website or something. [...] And so, going and looking at the year that we finally went and had an African American female who was a national officer, you know, that was , to me, a big deal. Then at the same time, I don’t really feel like the state associations go and push or support the diversity. They don’t go and make events or make awards or go and recognize the people in the community. They just pretty much keep quiet with that. So, I mean, again, looking at things through the FFA perspective, traveling a lot more with being a state officer and everything, I definitely saw a lot more things within different chapter, but I just really felt that the diversity aspect of things was never really celebrated. [...] But I mean, even just in general, looking at talks as far as FFA goes with state officer training and whatnot, it was a lot more focused towards looking at that aspect of how [students] identify themselves with their sexual orientation, versus going and having conversations about students who were identified different racially and how to address that. So, I mean, I guess that’s the part that kind of always struck me as odd. And you know again in a comfort level, it just seems that we don’t want to talk about it.”

Lack of diversity not only referred to racial demographics, but also to what music was played. When the researcher asked Torri if she ever had to leave behind a part of her identity, she mentioned that she felt like the Black part of her was left behind in FFA. Part of that being because the individuals around her did not even listen to the same kind of music as her.

“There were definitely times where I would go to FFA events and I would feel like I was leaving part of the Black identity. I had to be like, “Okay, I'm gonna put you over here, you can come back out later”, if that makes sense. Because I knew that I wouldn't be in a location that had other people like me, that looked like me, or that I identified with. I wouldn't be in a location that would be looking, or listening to the same type of music that I listened to. [...] I know this is silly, but I definitely never had the same taste in music as the majority of my counterparts. And even so much so as at state and national convention. I mean, they've started do it better, but in high school, it was like, makes funny face] I don't know who Brad Paisley is. Like, if you threw some Lady Gaga in there, I would know. She's my hero. And if you threw in some other stuff that you probably can't throw in because of the content of the music, but it's predominately like, rap or hip hop or r&b or funk. My dad raised me on Prince, so Prince would have been nice [laughs]. Now a little 1999, Purple Rain, whatever you want, I don't care. It would have just been nice to have felt like I can be here. And it's okay for me to be here, because you care that you're reaching out to people like me.”

Not only did the participants notice the lack of racial diversity within the FFA and those who participated in it, but also in the small things like the diversity of music that was played for all to partake in at events like National Convention.

**Representation.** Representation was a topic spoken about very passionately by the participants, both in FFA and in the ag classroom. Meagan spoke of her excitement and disbelief of finally seeing an ag teacher that looked like her after having only White ag teachers.

“So, then we had Mr. Carl come in and it was totally different. So, he came in my senior year, and obviously the first thing I noticed was like “Oh my gosh, that's a Black ag teacher in [City],” like, that was awesome. I was like, this is a crazy. And to seeing someone like me definitely made me feel more comfortable and I did end up getting way more involved senior year.”

Torri shared the same excitement of representation when speaking of seeing the races of both her and her family represented in FFA History, and now in present day. As she spoke, her face was plastered with a smile and her voice's pitch became ever higher with excitement.

“It's funny because I can remember going through the FFA manual and learning about the timeline and the history of FFA. And like we learned about all the people, and we got to Fred McClure. I was like, [face lights up with excitement] “That's like my dad!” And then I get to Corey Flournoy, and I'm like [voice becomes high pitched] “That guy's like me!” Um, and so I was really excited about that, and people were like, “Why are you excited about that?” Like, those are like me dang it! They, they represent my family, they represent me, they represent people from backgrounds that aren't the norm or the tradition. And so, people are like, “Why are you getting excited about stuff like that?” Because it's, it's me, man! I identify with that. You should too, but you don't. And there was only two people like that at the time. Now we got Brianna Hulbert, so I definitely identify with her, and I love that. I love everything about her. I have not met her. I want to meet her in person, and just like COVID-hug her like [air hugs] like this. Because I wish that I had had somebody just like her in the history book, in the history timeline. To be able to say, “Yeah, she's just like me. Like, *just* like me.”

It was evident that, to Torri, being able to have a role model who represented her in every way, as well as her family, obviously meant a lot to her. Even as an adult.

**Ag “norm”.** When FFA, or agriculture in general, was brought up during the interviews, the participants would often give their view on what the average or “normal” ag/FFA person looked and/or did. Rachael stated that generally, students in her ag class who came from small rural towns “had a lot of the same views” as her teachers, who also came from small rural towns. These views were regarding the election of 2016, and she spoke of how that caused tension within in the classroom. This tension being certain racial comments spoken about Mexicans. Meagan shared similar tension concerning racial matters within FFA as well, and how other students felt like people in FFA should act.

“There was always one kid who wanted to bring politics up like, “You're in FFA. Like you should act a little bit more Whiter. More White kids are in FFA.” And to them it might have been a joke, or they were trying to say it as a joke, or like not make it so serious. But to me it's like, I mixed. I'm allowed to be in FFA regardless, and neither nor is going to change me at all.”

Anaya felt like she had to act and look a certain way as well when it came to FFA, because that's how everyone expected her to be. When asked by the researcher if she ever felt like she had to leave a part of her behind, she shared about instances within FFA.

“I feel like, if anything, it probably would come down to the code switching or like, trying to look, with like my FFA uniform, that I look as ‘posh’ as possible. I look like I'm in within the guidelines, I look good. Like, it's all good, so that people know they can approach me. Things like that.”

When the researcher asked the same question to Kaitlyn, she replied with how she leaned into the “typical agriculture culture”.

“Yeah, I would say so. I think [leaving one behind] happens a lot in ag classes, especially since I wasn't strong enough of my own cultural background like for my minority ethnicities. I just kind of leaned into more of the, the typical agricultural culture, which is, you know, boots and jeans and country music and belts. And that's— there's nothing wrong with that. But I feel like I didn't have my own personhood in the middle of that.”

When speaking of the different phases he had while growing up and figuring out his identity, Isaac also shared of a similar phase within FFA as Kaitlyn had.

“And there were times I was trying to wear boots and jeans and be like the kids in FFA and fit in with FFA. But no matter how much I tried to do that, I'm still not them.”

### **Impostor Phenomenon Characteristics**

The second research question for the study was to see if the participants showed any elements of Impostor Phenomenon regarding their races. Participants shared many stories, expressed their feelings about their ethnicities, and how their races made them feel during everyday tasks and events. Clance (1985) noted that individuals must exhibit at least

two of the six dimensions to be considered to experience impostorism, although the characteristics of these dimensions may vary. All participants experienced at least two dimensions, with a total of four of the six dimensions being expressed in the culmination of all data.

### ***Need to Be Special / The Very Best***

As mentioned previously, Impostors yearn to be special and often secretly wish to be a genius (Clance, 1985). When it comes to racial Impostors, the researcher found that the participants were the exact opposite of that statement. Those suffering from IP racially, wish to be *just like everybody else*, and treated and seen as a *person*. Sometimes as who they are aside from their race.

When the researcher asked Rachael what would make her feel a sense of belonging in a group of one of her racial counterparts, she replied with a search for commonality outside of her race.

“I know it sounds like kind of ‘cliche’, but like, for them not to see me for my color, even though I possess both of them. I don't look Black, and I borderline don't look Hispanic, so I would just want them to see me as a person. Not for my race or even my ethnicity. Um, because if we have something in common, whether it be our race or identity or interest or whatever the case may be, you should be accepting of that. And I feel like if they just had a conversation with me and didn't regard my color, or my mannerisms, or how I talked, then it'd be good. I'd be like, okay, perfect! We're, we're getting along fine. I would definitely feel like I belong, even if I didn't look like them.”

Meagan was on the same wavelength as Rachael as she expressed similar thoughts when referring to becoming more involved within FFA. She shared, “When I got to [middle school], that was a whole new ballgame. We had gotten some new teachers and it was great. I got way more involved with FFA; it didn't really seem like my skin color mattered.” Her thoughts changed when referring to her new high school. Other FFA members had



made it known that she was ‘mixed’ and she has countered that by saying, “I’m just a person. I’m not here to say I’m Black or White. I’m not here to only make a difference because I’m Black, or anything like that.”

Anaya shares a story of a childhood experience and how she wished she looked like everyone else because of racism and bullying. As she spoke, the hurt in her voice and longing was evident from the past experiences.

“In elementary I would come home, watch my PBS Kids, grab my snack, do my homework, and then [short laugh], and then when it was time to go to bed, get on my knees and I prayed to God like, “Please give me blue eyes so that people will accept me. Please give me straight hair.” Because I was bullied for my eyes, my skin color, my hair. So, it was kind of like, get rid of all that so I can stop being bullied for stuff that I can’t change. And I would wear my hair up every single day from second grade all the way up until eighth grade, because I didn’t want people to say anything about my hair because I got comments in second grade. [...] In second grade is when I transferred schools. I went to a really diverse school to very White, preppy school. And so I’d say from there, people were like, “Oh, well I can’t see the board”, and the teacher would make a comment [to me] like, “Yeah, you probably should pin your hair back or something, or I can just move you”, and I’m like “Well, I can’t really see that well.” And [the teacher] is like, “Well, they can’t see either. So, we’ll just move you” and I was like, [shrugs shoulders] “Oh.. okay.” So, then I’d go to the back of the class. So, its just little things that would add up. [...] So it was like, “Well, maybe if I just ask God, maybe He’ll make it stop. Maybe I’ll just be able to change. One day, I’ll wake up and I’ll have blue eyes and people will love me.”

When speaking about her races, Kaitlyn told the researcher about wanting to “fit in” with those around her while in school and FFA.

“I feel like I just became a master chameleon. You know, it’s one of those things that I didn’t really talk about. [My races] were more of a funny, kind of a unique thing more than anything. But it wasn’t really talked about. I never like really tried hard to incorporate that into my friendships, or my personal life and I pretty much just tried to fit in.”

She goes on to explain this desire by saying, “I felt like I was just, kind of trying to blend in somewhere where I physically stood out.” The desire to blend in high school was evident in her voice.

Isaac shared of the impact his ag teacher had on him in high school. This impact was due to the way he had treated him as a person, as opposed to treating him differently because of other reasons such as his skin color or what last name he had.

“My ag teacher was a very, his name was [Name]. He was probably one of the most, you know, helping people. He's definitely one of the most monumental people my life, just because he helped me in ways I can't even, you know, put to words. Because that was, I can confidently say that that was one of the very few times in my life that I was treated by another individual as Isaac. Not as a Black kid. Not as someone with a certain last name. It was very teacher to student relationship. I was just treated as “my teacher wanted to see the best out of me”, regardless of what it, what it was. And it's as long as I was willing to do that work, then he was willing to put, invest more into me.”

Later in the interview, Isaac speaks on the concept of race itself saying, “And you know, hopefully, once we come to a time to realize that race is really just a concept then, you know, life would be good. But that's not the reality we live in, so.” His face showed that he wished for better, but still acknowledges the reality.

### ***Superman/ Superwoman Aspects***

Impostors are very perfectionistic in almost every aspect of their performance. This is derived from their need to be the very best (Clance, 1985). Some of participants of the study showed aspects of this dimension through their hard work in FFA to be seen as an equal to their White counterparts, as well as the hard work of striving to shed a good light, if not a great light, on their races to those around them. As previously mentioned, Rachael and Torri shared about instances of working hard for leadership positions within the FFA and their dedication to chapter events. Rachael shared about working hard in her struggle to be seen as equal to her White teammate in order to be considered for President the next year.

“I saw all the opportunity she got; she had gotten, and I work so much harder than her. I would go to every single event. She would never stay. She never went to events, and it just seemed like everything was handed to her even though she did nothing. And so, I worked extra hard to be able to... be looked at, be given opportunity... and to even be considered as President of my chapter the following year.”

Torri describes a different, yet similar situation at her own chapter. For context, she ran for President after being secretary the year before and was passed over for two others, one being new that school year and one being uninvolved. It should be noted that she was deemed “unmarketable”, and that both the members selected as President and Vice-President were White.

“You know, that part to me seemed really unfair at the time because it was just like, I've been involved. I've been going to the events. I've been competing. I've been attending leadership conferences. And, you know, I got an interview and thought, you know, Hey! This is going to be the year where I get the chance to be a leader and I can take this chapter, that is very small, and go ahead and turn it into something bigger! And have that piece of, you know, being in that leadership position. And I mean, you know, as far as things go, I was the one doing all the recruitment. I was the one who was attending junior high school nights and middle school nights at different schools all across [city]. Bringing my own animals with me. I made a display board. I made pamphlets, you know. I was, [short laugh] I was the one trying to market the program! But I was deemed “unmarketable” and so I didn't get that position.”

When speaking about his dedication to excellence, Isaac spoke of the struggle to succeed, and that his biracial identity elevated the difficulty.

“It didn't help being Black, because being Black means that you have to work twice as hard just to get half as much. So doing that while also fighting against not having that name. Not being related to the right families was definitely a very hard thing for me, but it also cultivated mean to the person I am. Because it made me determined, and made me hungry, made me want to be a step ahead of everybody. I want to be able to, you know, create that distance between everybody around me.”

Isaac expanded on this by referencing his hard work to assure those around him saw ‘his people’ favorably by putting his best foot forward and never making Black people look bad by his own actions.

“Me being the only Black person in the room, that means that I have to present myself as the entire Black population. I am the only Black person most people will meet for years, until if they even go to college. For some people, I am the only Black person they know. So, for me, I have to always put myself in a position to where, “How can I represent being Black the best way I can?” And a lot of times that does put aside, sometimes my own viewpoints on things just because I try to not to like.... in the past, I did do that a lot, because I tried to not give off a bad image of a Black people like, I- I'd have to create potential conversations before they even happened, so I knew how to interact with them. I had to always think five, six steps ahead, just so I could be on the same playing field, the same type of conversation; so I didn't look either dumb or I didn't present myself in any type of negative notion of what being Black is, or what Black people are. Because already, being Black in FFA, people think that you don't know anything. That you don't have any type of understanding of agriculture. And they, a lot of them think that this may not be the industry we belong in. So, carrying that weight as well and trying to understand “How can I be that Black person that does know all those things, that does understand all the things that they're talking about.” So for me, I had to play the game of just always having to sit and listen, always having to ask questions. I asked more questions, probably then anybody in the whole entire school combined when it came to FFA, just because I never want to put myself in a position to look bad for my people. I don't want to say anything and make myself look stupid, because already they're thinking I don't know anything. So I wouldn't say I had to put, I guess, my race always to the side. If anything, I had to put my race on a pedestal. I had to put who I am on a pedestal, because I had to represent all Black people so much more, to so many people, and give us that better image to give other people to see that the things that they see on the news isn't the real recognition. The real representation of who we are as a people.”

### ***Fear of Failure***

For racial IP sufferers, the researcher found that the fear of failure comes in many forms, as will be discussed below. In the interviews, these were fears of being singled out and/or rejected because of the possession of multiple races and the cultures. These fears a manifested in the multiracial individuals in various ways, such as being singled out or rejected because:

- They don't look like everyone else (not light enough or dark enough, hair is different texture).
- They are speaking another language or speak with a certain accent.
- They *don't* speak another language or *don't* speak with a certain accent.
- They listen to different music or wear different clothes.

- Others don't believe their parents are of the races they claim them to be (due to physical features or lack thereof)
- They may have to speak against their "friends" on the harmful words they said towards their race, or other races.

Often in the interviews the participants stated using code switching and assimilative tendencies, in which the researcher assumes, to avoid these fears. When speaking with Whitney, she confessed fears concerning expressing her Hispanic ethnicity and speaking Spanish in front of her peers in fear that she would be singled out, all at the expense of being true to her identity.

"Especially now that I'm around a greater White population than I was before, um, I feel like I have to hide certain parts of me that that I feel. Whether it be scared, or worried, or about what they think of me, or what they'd say. Because I don't like confrontation at all, and if they just started you know, saying racial slurs to me or whatever the case may be, I wouldn't know what to do. [laughs nervously] I would be so scared, and so out of place. And especially being in AgEd, it's been a challenge being able to, you know... I wanted to incorporate Spanish into some of my lessons, and I play- for my first lesson I played Hispanic music along with English music, to, kind of represent myself. And they were kind of just like "I don't, I don't, what is this?" And so it's kind of been hard to, I guess be like, hey, this is me and this is what I represent. This is what I possess. And I shouldn't be afraid to say that in front of you guys. Or show that."

When the researcher dug further and asked Rachael if she felt like she could incorporate both sides of her within her ag classroom, she was adamant in her response. She answered with an immediate, unquestionable absoluteness.

"Absolutely not. [shakes head] Absolutely not. They, um, I would always say I was Hispanic, and I spoke Spanish, I was fluent. I was my first language. But I never put it into action. I don't think my advisors, other than the Mr. [Name], ever heard me speak Spanish, ever. Even if it was with my mom. When my mom would come to FFA events, ceremonies, and banquets, I would not talk Spanish to her. I would not. No. That was just something I didn't do. I felt like I couldn't do. Because if I started to do it, then it all eyes would just be on me, like, uhh no. So, I never. I would hide that side of me at [the agriculture center] a lot more. [...] I would, I would never speak Spanish there. And when I would walk in the building, it just seemed like a switch [snaps fingers] had turned on, and I was like, "okay, [snaps] be White." And then when I'd leave and go back to [my home school], I'd be like "Okay, [snaps] be Hispanic." When I would walk into my house, [snaps] "be Hispanic." Even now when I go home, I don't talk about college. I don't tell them

about my classmates. I don't do any of that stuff either. So it's, it's on both sides. I don't tell them anything about college, I don't tell them anything about my friends, anything like that. And then when I was at [the agriculture center], or even here, I don't talk about my family. I don't, I just don't do that. It's not because I'm not proud, it's just I'm very scared of what they'd say to me."

Due to these same fears, Meagan told the researcher of when she had to be conscious of even the music she was listening to while going into school in fear of how the advisors would see it.

"I think being an officer, and being biracial, even being a member and being involved, I think that I was like, "Okay Meagan, I can't, I can't show up to school listening to my Tupac or Biggie or anything like that, because that would seem to Black to my advisors, and they would get so mad at me."

Torri was in a somewhat similar situation as Meagan in the fact that she had to be conscious of her actions around certain groups of people. She spoke of these instances after the researcher asked if she ever had to leave a part of herself behind during FFA.

"When I would go to large events or gatherings, where I was pretty much the only Black person, I knew, "Okay, I need to kind of tread carefully, because I don't know what type of people are here, and what they feel about Black people." [...] But yeah, there were definitely times where I knew that I was around people who were either prejudice or racist, and I knew I couldn't talk about it or look like I'm doing something, or act like I'm doing something that would be a trigger for them."

When it came to racial comments, some of the participants felt like they had to give friends passes on what they said because they were fearful that they would no longer have that acceptance they craved if they spoke against them. Shanika was one of those participants. When the researcher asked if she had ever put aside one of her races to make others comfortable, she responded with an answer that felt like she was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

"I really wanted to have friends and so, there were some cases where you kind of just ignore the things that usually you want to filter out and you want to call people out on. But trying to find that acceptance piece of things was my thing. And so,

giving people excuses and giving people free passes in the sense of, “Oh, they said that, but I’m not going to call them on it because I want them to still be my friend.”

Most of the participants felt as if they had to *prove* who they were and where they came from when questioned on their racial status. This proof took many forms, differing on the participant or the specific race, and whether the participant looked to be a member of the race or not. Proving felt instrumental to the participants, even if it was irritating, because the participants felt like they would be rejected as a member of their race unless they could come up with a valid reason for someone to believe them, a.k.a proof.

Anaya was asked to prove she was French in various ways. One avenue being speaking the language, although even when she showed she could, she was then critiqued on that linguistic ability. Anaya also had to prove her racial background due to the rejection of her race and insistence of another by her peers on the swim team. Likewise, Torri was asked to prove her claim to Blackness by showing a picture of her father. This was because she didn’t ‘look’ Black.

“So, there's always, I guess, been this piece of me that's had to extra defend [...] that I am Black and that my Black side does exist. Because It's not that I don't ever fear that people won't realize it, it's just that I don't want people to forget. That, yes, there is a Black woman in the room. It may not look like it, but there is.”

As Torri spoke, her eyebrows slightly creased and there was a tone in her voice showing her longing to be accepted as who she was. Torri continues on with her story and her voice gains a tone resentment of the reason behind having to have a picture of her family on her desk.

“To this day, I have a picture of my family on my desk, just like anybody would. But you don't have people who aren't biracial putting their pictures of their family to PROVE something. *You* have it there as a sentiment. Like, “That's my family”. For *me*, yes, it's a sentiment, but it's also like [holds up her hand as if holding a picture] “This is the genetics that I come from.” And I have that, I have it readily available on my phone, too, because you just never know.”

Unlike Torri, Stephanie didn't want her Asian heritage known to her peers. Stephanie's fear of failure came from the expectations placed on Asians regarding academics. When the researcher asked her if she had found a balance within her races, she responded that she had yet to really explore her Asian side. Although, she also felt like she would not be able to live up to the stereotypes of being Asian if others found out this about her. She was afraid of failing other's expectations of her, expectations she would not carry if no one knew.

“Um, but I think that's something I just don't talk about a lot, because people will raise their expectations. There's the stereotype where Asians are [voice becomes high pitched] super smart, and they get the perfect SAT scores and all that. And that wasn't ever me within my high school career.”

### ***Denial of Competence & Denial of Praise***

While denial of competence is usually only done by the individual themselves in IP, when it comes to racial IP, the researcher found instances where competence was denied by society as well. Both denial by others and denial by of self will be discussed below.

**Denial of Competence from Others.** Throughout the interviews, the participants shared moments where they were stripped of their identity through the denial of one or more of their races by those around them. As Jasmine speaks of her time in school, she mentions that this happened to her both in school and within FFA.

“Always, always, always, even now in my “main courses”, I've always kind of struggled. But agriculture has always just came easy. So, I always felt accepted in that way, but then there would always be that *one* person who made it very clear that I was.... like they thought that I was not fit to be in Ag at all. So that always always bothered me and still does sometimes”



She expands on this later in the conversation when the researcher asks her if she has had a hard time finding balance within her races.

“I think all the time. Even now. Especially now with Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Black Lives Matter movement itself. It's raised a lot of questions for me still being 19 years old. And still trying to figure out who I am aside from my race is really hard I think right now. Because There's always someone somewhere, making sure it's pointed out. Even if it's not me, if it's not my mom or dad, like neither one of them make it known. But someone, somewhere outside of my comfortable space, is always trying to make it questionable for me.”

Shanika's racial identity was dismissed many times because of her chosen career path and where she was from. She speaks of how people disregard her career because its not a “typical” African American choice.

“I mean, again, for myself, I really tried to hold my own with things as far as my identity. I'm not going to try and make my skin darker or lighter and whatnot, you know. But in the other sense of things, of other people's expectations, I mean, yeah, I would get that from Black people and stuff. “You're not from the hood. You don't know what it's like.” And it's like, well, I mean, I live in Arizona, so the types of hoods that we have are pretty different. And I mean that was coming from a Black male who lives in the Bronx. And so, I mean, I can definitely say, yeah, I haven't necessarily had the same experiences with you, but I also don't live there. So, I don't know. And again, as far as my major and everything and bringing that up in a crowd of Black people, they're just like, “Well, why aren't you going into something like liberal arts or political science or pharmacy or something else?”, so basically just being dismissive of what I'm trying to pursue. There are different cases where it's like, okay. Obviously, I'm not what these Black professors or these, you know, higher Black authority people are looking for, necessarily, because I'm not doing, I guess, ‘typical’ African American things. But like I said, I made an effort to try and immerse myself in different things.”

Anaya's shares of when racial identity was denied by her fellow peers in elementary school. When the researcher asked about her identity, she shares of how its changed and how people tried dictate her choice through parentage.

“I think I'd say that what I identify as has changed over time. As a kid, people would identify me as Black, but I wanted to be identified as White because I wanted to be accepted within elementary. And people would always say like, “Oh, we usually go with whatever your dad is.” And I remember, there was this other mixed kid in my elementary school. And she was like, “Well, my dad's White, so I'm White.”

And he's like, "Well your dad's Black, so you're Black." And I was like, that doesn't make any sense. That's not fair because you get to pass as White and have things easier. And I don't get to, and we look the same. So like, as a kid that was kind of confusing."

Further along in the conversation Anaya spoke of when she would discuss racial issues amongst collegiate peers, and how this happened yet again, even years later. She tells the researcher of when she would critique the actions of White people, and how other White people would argue with her and use her racial composition against her.

"That leads to arguments with predominantly White people. And they'll tell me like "You do know you're White, too." And I would be like [raises arms in the air to show her skin, laughs/snorts] "You best believe I know! I've lived in it for 21 years!" But sometimes I think that they think that I don't know, just because I'm making a critique about [racial issues]. But I wouldn't want that to like [pauses] make me lesser than when it comes giving an opinion on a particular topic."

When Anaya said "But I wouldn't want that to like... make me lesser than when it comes giving an opinion on a particular topic", "that" is referring to the fact that she is of the race she is critiquing. She fears that her opinion would be looked on as lesser because she possesses the race that she is choosing to critique.

Torri shared of when her grandmother unknowingly dismissed her claim to Blackness while she was growing up by 'revoking' her ability to use the N-word. That was in response to her skin color, thus making her question her claim to other areas pertaining to her races, even though it was in concern for her wellbeing.

"My, my grandmother would actually do it in a way, but she did it as a warning. So she'd just be like "Torri, you know you cannot say the N-word." We never used the N-word anyway in my family, but she's like, "You definitely can't say it because you're White-looking." And it's like, oh. So stemming from that in my head, I'm thinking, "Okay, what else can I not say around either group, and not be chased out of town with torches and pitchforks?" You know? Like, I don't want to walk into a group of Black people and then, you know, say something and they be like [turns head quizzically] "Who that White girl? What you saying? Like, sit down." So now it's like, [acts pouty] "but I am one of you!" [laughs] But then you don't walk into a White group either and start spittin' out rap lyrics. They're like "What? Get outta

here. We don't listen to that kind of junk”, you know? So, I've always had to be cautious of that. And then, thankfully, my mom and my grandmother, and my dad kind of instilled that in me a little bit early on, so that way I didn't ever really run into trouble with it.”

She later speaks of a time speaking with school peers where negative words were spoken about one of the racial identities she possesses, without the speaker including her into that racial category.

“I had them say something derogatory and negative towards my Black identity, and they say, “But we're not talking about you.” [laughs] and its like, then who the heck are you talking about!? Because what you just said, I'm sure if I wasn't here, or if I looked differently, you probably wouldn't have said it the way that you did. I have people who make clan jokes. And there's ones that, they don't make clan jokes, but they talk about clans. And they're like, “But we [the clan] wouldn't go to your house.” And it's like, what do you mean you wouldn't go to my house? I've had people who I knew were racist or prejudice not talk to my brother [due to his darker complexion and ability to pass as Black], but talk to me, even though we were standing side by side. So, I've had that before.”

Similarly, Isaac stated an incident in which he was speaking with other FFA members about a current racial injustice incident of the time. Those who he spoke with also did not include him into their blanket racial statements.

“So I know especially a lot of people in my chapter, though. I guess it was before I was in high school [...] I do remember a lot of people talking. They would all have all these snarky Black comments, but they would be like, “Oh, well, you're not one of them Isaac, you're not like them.” And it was a lot of times when there was anything brought up about Black people, was always that, “Oh, well you're not them.” And I'd have to pause and remind them like, “but I am them.” Those are MY people. Yes, I'm in FFA with you guys, but at the end of the day, I'm still a Black man in America. At the end of the day, the stuff that happens to these people that you try to find all these different accusations for, that can very much be me. And in times, HAS been me and just luckily I didn't die from those instances.”

When the research her asked Isaac if he had trouble finding balance within his racial identity, he tells the researcher of when his Blackness was questioned, and how he found that to be of the utmost disrespect.

“So, um, I didn't have a whole lot of color to me. So a lot of people would, you know, I'd go through school and the White kids would always say like, “Oh, I know, I listen to rap” and all this. “I'm Blacker than you”, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's really kind of frustrating when, especially as Black people, for your Blackness to be questioned. It's like one of the biggest, I take that to the biggest form of disrespect. Just because I am who I am. I am Black and you can't take that away from me. But for someone to try to take my identity away from me and try to, you know, remove that it is very frustrating. [Have you had that done to you?] Oh yes, all the time in high school. Especially because people always like to connect being educated with White. So, me always being able to articulate myself, always being able to have good grades, writing well, and just being smart in general, I was not looked at as an educated Black kid. I was looked at as a Black kid who was trying to act White. But being educated to signify education as being something to only be available to White people was kinda like.. it was definitely a huge slap in the face. And it felt like the biggest double negative I could I ever really experience because not only are you trying to take away my identity as a Black man, you're saying that because how educated I am, that there's no way that I can be Black. And I dealt with that all the way through high school. And that's something a lot of people you know, that's something I'll probably do with for a real long time in general, because I know more African Americans also face the same issue. If you talk proper, if you are someone who's interested in education, someone who's interested in wanting to better yourself, people associate that with big White. But that's because we've created such a wash system to make it seem like education is only available to White people. Which for many years it was, but no longer is that our reality. Now do they have better educational systems and things like that? Yes, that's still definitely exists today because this is very much still America. But it is still very frustrating to have people try to signify that *because* you are educated, you cannot be of your own race.”

Through the findings, participants had stated feelings of “not being or knowing enough” of something. Usually, in regard to the percentage of the races they held, or knowledge about their cultures or languages associated with them. Although for this situation, Meagan, Anaya, Torri, Kaitlyn, and Whitney all shared that they felt very unwelcomed when or if someone told them that they were ‘not enough’ to be a part of their group in various forms or fashions. When asking Whitney what would take away her sense of belonging within a group, she shared:

“Saying, “You don't know us. You don't know our struggle.” Something I really struggle with, especially with the White side of it, is like “You don't share our same culture because you live in a house that doesn't practice that culture that we do.”

You know, this sounds very stereotypical, but like “You don't go to church every Sunday. You don't watch football every Sunday. You don't have a two-person home, like a two-parent home. You don't hold Christian values, or you don't whatever the case may be.” I think that's... that's the race that I have the hardest time finding that sense of belonging. Especially in the major that I'm in. [So, you feel like, I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but almost like your culture is not the same as their White culture, maybe?] Yes. One hundred percent. Like my culture is not valid because “You don't practice our culture.” In a sense, “You don't know what we go through. You don't know us. You never you never did any of the things that we did, growing up. So, you are not us. You will never be us. And you will never share our culture.”

What Whitney shared gave the researcher a strong sense that these words had been said to her before in real life. Words that dismissed her from what they deemed as competent as someone of White heritage, a heritage she claimed as her own and identified as.

**Denial of Competence from Self.** As shown above, participants of the study had shown many instances where their competence had been questioned or denied by those around them. Although, it can be said that even if those around them said they were not competent, they can still feel confident in their own competence as members of their multiple racial groups. The problem arises when impostor feelings start to creep in when they begin to doubt their own competencies, thus their claim to their races.

Specifically, Stephanie and Kaitlyn had strong feelings of incompetence in the past when it came to their races. Their backgrounds are similar in the fact that they grew up trying to “fit in” with those around them, and they often identified themselves as White in many settings. Stephanie and Kaitlyn also did not have what Kaitlyn described as “a strong foothold” in their non-White culture enough to where they felt like they could “fully represent other people that have that same ethnicity.” The researcher asked Kaitlyn if she felt like she was ‘doing it right’ in regard to her races. As she spoke, the feeling of past

incompetence was evident, although, she still found pride in who she was as a member of her races.

“I think it's hard to do it right, because I don't really know what right is. I just always feel just not quite enough. And I feel like... there's no way to get to be enough. So it's just balancing things, and making sure that you feel right with yourself and that you're proud of who you are and all of those different things. And understanding that I can be proud to be Filipino and I can be proud to be Puerto Rican, but I can't possibly know what it's like to be only that and to grow up with the prejudice and even all of the beauties of that culture, because that's not me. And that's not my identity. But still playing a supporting role in that. And then honoring my own self, that I do have my own foothold in that, and I can honor that, I can be proud to be those things. And it took a long time to feel that way because I felt like it wasn't right for me to feel proud to be something that I didn't know everything about, or that I didn't grow up in. [So, did you feel like it was wrong to claim those cultures due to the lack of a physical or mental connection to it?] Yeah, I did feel like at times that it was wrong. Just because I feel like I was representing something that I didn't have a knowledge base in or even really a strong identity in yet, and I resented that. I used to feel really uncomfortable when people would ask me to be a part of things to almost “check the racial box” because [laughs] I check a lot of boxes! But I feel like I didn't fully feel like... I wasn't truly representing the people I was supposed to be representing, because I felt like an imposter in that space. And now I feel like I do have a seat at the table, but again, I would want to just use that to empower other voices, too. Because I can only speak from my own experiences and from my own identity, which is a blend.”

Likewise, Stephanie expressed feelings of not being ‘good enough’ according to what is expected of those of Asian heritage with an air of nonchalance. As if it was an every day normal for her.

“I would say, especially for my Asian identity. I feel like I was never smart enough because there was always that expectation there of getting the high SAT scores, getting all A's high school, and I was never one of those students. I like to challenge myself academically, but that doesn't mean I was going to produce an A out of the class. So, I felt like I just wasn't good enough in that aspect.”

Kaitlyn experienced feelings of incompetence because she desired to be *more* of something. She felt as if she was a “watered-down version” when speaking of learning about her culture.

“I felt like I was always wanting to be more of something, you know? To be honest, I enjoyed the part of being different once I, you know, fully learned to appreciate those

parts of me. So, I wanted to have a stronger foothold in that. I wanted to know how to speak Spanish, because especially growing up in Arizona, I feel like people often assume that I knew Spanish and would come up to me talking to me. And it sometimes would be people who didn't know English, and I wish I could be that comfort for them, and that person to help them, and I wasn't. And I've always felt not good enough in that regard. And then also with my Filipino side, I felt like in the same way I would start to go into areas where there would be Filipino restaurants and in Filipino stores and things like that. And I would go in, and I would feel so appreciative when people would recognize that I was part Filipino, but again, they try and talk to me and I couldn't understand or speak with them. I was learning for the first time so, I felt like I was kind of a 'watered down version' Yeah, I felt like I never felt good enough in the predominantly White community either, because I felt like everybody could tell that I wasn't like them. But I didn't have enough foothold in something else to feel strong enough in that either."

Even though the conversation continued, Kaitlyn looped back around to hit on the subject once again. She speaks of how she wasn't "enough" and did not want to misrepresent minorities, but felt like she had a responsibility that if she didn't represent them, who would?

"Not only was I uncomfortable to really talk about those parts of myself because they made me stand out or be different or made other people uncomfortable, but I also felt like I tried to hide it away because I didn't feel like I was *enough* of those things. And like I said, I'd be asked to be a part of these initiatives or committees, or clubs based off of my ethnicity, when I didn't feel like I was enough of those things to be the voice for other people. I felt like I was going to be found out at some point, like they were not going to accept me as their voice, but there was nobody to give me that affirmation either because I was the only person in a predominantly White community. So, I felt somewhat of a responsibility. Like, if I don't, that's not even going to be there. There's no one going to be representing any minority in that regard. But then I also felt like when I did take on that role, that I just wasn't enough for anybody to come after me."

Whitney shared similar feelings of incompetence in not having an extensive knowledge about all the traditions and values of her races. This was found when she was asked by the researcher if she "felt like it was wrong to claim the connection to one of her races because she didn't, or didn't feel like, she looked like that race" regarding her Black racial status.

“I don't do it. Maybe because I'm just scared to be like, “I'm the same as you.” But I don't think it's wrong, but I also think there's a limit. Because I can't sit there and be like, “I know exactly what you're talking about” because I haven't seen any of my Black family in years. I don't know their traditions. I don't know their values. I don't know what they go through every single day, because I don't look like them. If that makes sense. So, I think there is a certain point to say I'm a minority. I understand you're a minoritized race. These are some things that we probably have experienced similar experiences. But I can never say that I'm them. At least that's how I feel. I can never say that I am [Black Female Friend], or I can never say that I'm [Black Male Friend]. I can never say that.”

Throughout Shanika's interview, she told the researcher how even though she identified solely as a Black woman, she wasn't always accepted as one. To the researcher this seemed to influence her self-competence as a Black woman. These feelings of incompetence were discovered when she shared:

“But then, you know, also kind of feeling slightly out of place within being in situations where I was with other Black people, if that makes sense [...] And so, I mean, sometimes, again, I don't think people would identify me as being Black, but you know sometimes I would kind of get confused as to what exactly they would identify with me anyway.”



## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter draws conclusions from the data collected in adherence to the purpose of this study. This study focused on the purpose understanding the lived experiences of multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education programs. To do this, the researcher sought to describe the experiences of the participants throughout their lives pertaining to the possession of multiple racial heritages. By conducting the study, the researcher was able to (a) analyze the experiences between multiracial students and the people around them (b) explore how those interactions impacted their lives and (c) sought to determine if Impostor Phenomenon regarding race was present among multiracial students. To do this, the researcher had two research questions:

*Question 1:* What is the multiracial student perspective of lived experience in secondary Agricultural Education?

*Question 2:* Which elements of racial Impostor Phenomenon existed during the secondary Agricultural Education experience?

In this chapter, the researcher will conclude the findings of the study while discussing the implications from those conclusions and then provide recommendations.

### **Conclusions**

In response to the findings of this study, and in recognition of its limitations, five conclusions were drawn from the hours of interviews and the data analysis process.

1. Impostor Phenomenon exists within the multiracial participants during their secondary agricultural education experience.

2. The youth organization, or FFA, is conusive to a particular style and culture; thus magnifying impostor feelings within multiracial members.
3. Multiracial students lack role models within secondary agricultural education, including FFA, that reflect multiracial identities.
4. Multiracial students are pressured within agricultural education to fit monoracial labels, standards, and stereotypes through monoracial racism.
5. Multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education programs lack the guidance needed to navigate their racial status, that differs from their monoracial parents, within a monoracial society.

Each of the aforementioned conclusions will be further discussed below.

### **Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations**

***Conclusion 1: Impostor Phenomenon exists within the multiracial participants during their secondary agricultural education experience.***

Impostor Phenomenon is present among the multiracial participants. Every participant exhibited signs of at least two of the six dimensions of Impostor Phenomenon; thus, qualifying as someone who experiences feelings of impostorism (Clance, 1985).

When it comes to racial IP, the researcher found that there was another element to this. The denial of competence not only came from the person suffering from IP, but also from those around them. Even though the participants genetically hold the rights to claim their races, they are continuously shut down by those around them. This puts in play the element previously stated of wanting the reassurance of their competence, of which they

are not receiving in this instance. This makes it even more difficult to internalize their right to claim all their races.

Provided the existence of IP within multiracial students, the findings pose that we can safely imply that social acceptability of multiracial heritage is not present (Millville et al., 2005). Even though they have a marginal status, they do not *feel* like they are accepted by either group (Alb & Nee, 1997). The multiracial individuals *feel* like they are impostors among monoracials, even among monoracials of their own races. They are fearful that they are not the “norm” due to their possession of multiple races (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). To those who are racial Impostors, this fear is that any actions they make in accordance with one of their races, that goes ‘against’ any of their races, would make them seem like a fraud to the former and thus make the claim to their race that they ‘acted against’ null and void.

Even though they have a tangible genetic claim to both of their races, they are still “painfully aware of their deficiencies” in regard to one or more races, and that they “tend to see others’ strength and abilities and to admire and overrate the intelligence or achievements of those around them, always comparing themselves to these people, always believing that in comparisons they come up short” (Clance, 1985).

**Recommendations.** The researcher would suggest that educators be encouraged to attend professional developments (PD’s) centered around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. More specifically, PD’s that center around multiracial students, considering that they are usually left out of the conversation when referring to minorities. In one study, teachers were unaware of multiracials and their heritages. While the teachers knew that the students were biracial, they would identify them as being monoracial, disregarding what the student wanted to be identified as.

Professional developments centered around multiracial students would spread awareness of the differences between them and monoracial students, as many of the differences are highlighted in this study. These PD's would ideally communicate how to interact with students regarding their heritages, what and what not to say in referencing their actions (i.e. their dress, language/accents, music, friends/partners, etc.), and how to show their acceptance of their identity. This is considering that their identity will go through changes, especially during adolescents (Poston, 1990). The acceptance of their chosen identity may alleviate their feelings in the ag classroom over time.

***Conclusion 2: The youth organization, or FFA, is conducive to a particular style and culture; thus magnifying impostor feelings within multiracial members.***

Clance (1985) states that while most of the fears of “not being good enough” experienced by IP victims are confined to career and intellectual pursuits, these fears *can* spill over into their relationships with others. Many of the participants stated that they felt like they had to dress a certain way (i.e., boots and jeans) to fit in with FFA kids. That, coupled with the lack of diversity within FFA (Lawrence et. al., 2013) may make them feel like they are not socially accepted, thus creating feelings of IP. These norms fostered within agriculture and FFA, while not inherently bad, still made some of the participants feel like they didn't belong because they did not identify with those norms. While all the participants stated that they still had a love for agriculture and participated within it, those norms weren't who they are, and made them feel like they weren't normal.

These feelings of impostorism in multiracial students within the FFA implies a lack of diversity, or acceptance of diversity within it, especially within rural chapters that the

multiracial participants where a part of. Rural chapters have an 88% White membership compared to Suburban (84%) and Urban chapters (64%), with the FFA chapters having a greater White population compared to their surrounding community by 14.83 - 31.66% respectively (Lawrence et. al., 2013). With this information we can imply that the diversity of the chapter plays a role in the experiences of IP that multiracial members have when feeling like they don't fit into the particular culture that the FFA fosters.

**Recommendations.** To combat this, the researcher recommends giving all students equal opportunity, no matter what. If that means changing the way competition teams are assembled, do so. If this means the officer candidate selection process has to be rewritten, do so. It's an educator's responsibility to provide equal opportunity to all without bias.

Second, allow students to wear what makes them feel confident in themselves. Through the researcher's personal experiences and observations, many advisors require a certain attire for their students to compete in or to go to certain events. Allowing students to wear clothes (within reason and practicality) that express who they are without having to conform to the FFA culture can make sure that the students still, in Kaitlyn's words, "have [their] own personhood", even within the FFA.

"Throughout the FFA, a key factor in the leadership that defines, encompasses, and takes place throughout the organization, is the FFA advisor or agricultural educator" (Nowak et al., 2019). The researcher recommends that advisors take this to heart. Even if the FFA at large takes a while to change, we can still make change in our individual classrooms.

A recommendation for the National FFA Organizations specifically would be to attempt to appeal to those outside of the FFA culture through an avenue as easy as music. Torri mentioned that only country music was played during national convention. The FFA could easily find an artist in a different genre in which they could use as a vehicle to connect with a variety of students. In Torri's words, this is a small, yet noticeable way to let students know "that it's okay for them to be here".

Additionally, educators should provide our multiracial students, as well as all of our students, with a voice of empowerment. In the broadest sense, empowerment refers to individuals, families, organizations, and communities gaining control and mastery, within the social, economic, and political contexts of their lives, in order to improve equity and quality of life (Chinman & Linney, 1998). Through our youth organization, or FFA, we are able to offer opportunities to our members to gain control of activities in the Program of Activities (POA) and the ability to master skills necessary for class and competitions. In turn, these have the potential to improve the equity and quality of their lives where it would not be available elsewhere.

To do this, Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE) is a conceptual framework available that is based on the integration of youth empowerment processes and outcomes at the individual and collective levels. These occur within welcoming, youth-centered environments, through meaningful engagement and knowledge, skill, and leadership development, critical reflection on societal forces and power relations, and active community participation, leading to change in sociopolitical processes, structures, norms, or images (Jennings et al., 2006).

The researcher believes that organizations such as the FFA have the potential to be a welcoming, youth centered environment considering it has a lot of the characteristics necessary for CYE as stated previously. Through their classrooms and the FFA, advisors can offer the opportunity to gain that knowledge, skill, leadership, etc. that can lead to change in the lives of multiracial youth. Youth organizations' environments should be welcoming to everyone who steps foot in them. They should be safe, supportive, fun, caring, and challenging (Jennings et al., 2006). This means supporting multiracial student by promoting their positive potential and actual achievements (Cargo, 2003). The advisors are able to create "clout" in the community for these students to those who may think otherwise of the capabilities and intentions (Royce et al., 2004; Royce et al, April 2004).

***Conclusion 3: Multiracial students lack role models within secondary agricultural education, including FFA, that reflect multiracial identities.***

Lawrence et al. (2013) explained that of the 123 Lead FFA advisor participants, 93.75% were White. Multiracials don't have representation in many student leadership role models either, considering less than a handful of National FFA Officers have ever been multiracial (National FFA Organization, 2021).

Multiracial individuals have to refer to other racial minorities to find role models within the FFA that represent them. "In looking for images of oneself or one's group, and not finding them, individuals may feel that their racial identities are being ignored or are invisible in the larger culture" (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008). Not being able to find that 'role model' happens often for multiracials, seeing as a lot of the multiracial role models who are available to them may claim monoracial identities (e.g. Barack Obama is

Multiracial but identifies as Black). Some of the participants felt they had to settle for representation of only one other of their racial identities, in which they are still grateful for.

Finding role models that represent multiracial FFA members is still a hard feat considering that just in 2017, Breanna Holbert was elected as the first Black (multiracial) female President elected to National office. She followed the foots steps of Fred McClure, the first Black National FFA officer elected in 1974, and Corey Flournoy who was the first Black National FFA President in 1994, just 27 years ago. These individuals are three of just six Black officers to hold a national office in the FFA's then 89-year history at the time.

Since the FFA was founded, it seems only 12 National FFA Officers have identified as a racial minority (National FFA Organization, 2021). After contacting personnel at the National FFA Organization, the researcher was made aware that no racial demographics were collected on National Officer applications. Demographics were obtained through public knowledge and pictures, although the researcher acknowledges that pictures are not 100% accurate of one's race.

The lack of a significant amount of role models also implies the lack of multiracial participation within FFA presently, or in the past, which would have snowballed into possible role models in present day. In the study where Talbert & Balshweid (2006) were collecting demographics for FFA members' career aspirations, 2.2% of the 500 participants were multiracial. Read that again. This could be due to agricultural educator's passive recruitment attempts of minorities (Bowen, 1994).

Additionally, it could also imply that those multiracials who *did* participate, or racial minorities in general, where never afforded the opportunities to *become* those role



models, in comparison to the opportunities of the racial majority of the FFA. The testimonies of the participants show that representation, especially within an area of limited racial diversity such as ag, is ever more important to students within FFA.

**Recommendations.** The researcher would recommend acknowledging the multiracial population not vastly seen within the profession and highlighting those multiracial students. This can easily be done through the curriculum. Educators can show their multiracial students the multiracial role models available to them in the organization, both past and present, and possibly incorporate the research of their achievements in agriculture along with their monoracial counterparts. This can be done on June 12<sup>th</sup>, or Loving Day. While not a national holiday, despite attempts to make it so, June 12<sup>th</sup> is known as the day anti-miscegenation laws were banned and is the largest multiracial celebration in the United States.

Granted, the researcher would advise caution during “highlighting” attempts. The reason behind this being so that these highlight attempts don’t turn into tokenism. Be prideful in your students, not bragging of your diversity. Educators should make sure that they are highlighting for the right reasons. That it's for the benefit of the students and not for their image.

Additionally, the National FFA Organization and agricultural education teachers should make greater efforts to recruit minority members (Luft, 1996; Moore, 1994)., program revisions may be necessary to appeal to culturally diverse students to accomplish this task. To aid the appeal to culturally diverse students, educators and pre-service teachers should also be required to take courses based on culturally diverse teaching, and be encouraged to implement it in their classrooms. The presence of diversity in America

should be recognized as the strength it is, as various ethnic groups contribute greatly to the national culture and agriculture itself, while still maintaining their distinct identity (Luft, 1996).

***Conclusion 4: Multiracial students are pressured within agricultural education to fit monoracial labels, standards, and stereotypes through monoracial racism.***

Society's traditional notions and assumptions about race are challenged by multiracial individuals because they cannot be placed into society's preexisting racial categories (Spickard, 1992). Renn (2009) notes the recurring situations in which students of multiple races and ethnicities are forced to "choose only one" on data collections and are not given the right to self-identify. This infers a message that "being monoracial is the norm or ideal, and that being multiracial is substandard or different" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010).

While racism is experienced by all racial minorities, multiracials are unique in the fact that racism can come at them from either or all their races (Millville et al., 2005). This specific racism is called multiracial racism. As stated in the literature review, findings by Brackett et al. (2006) suggested that not fitting into other people's conceptions of racial categories may lead to experiencing more racial discrimination. Racism was experienced by the participants throughout the study.

Multiracial adolescents are constantly faced with racist experiences and are pressured to identify with a specific racial group (Millville et al., 2005). Multiracial participants' need the opportunity to identify *as their whole* and should not be forced to "leave one behind". Pressure exists among the participants to identify with one race due to

the standards and stereotypes that society has forced upon them. This was done to the way they acted or the career they chose, what they saw in society and felt like they had to uphold, and the way they dressed or what music they listened to. False understandings of how certain racial groups should behave, look, and exist within U.S. society are led by racial stereotypes (Omi & Winant, 2015). Significantly more discrimination and bias is reported by multiracial students compared to White and Latina/o students (Hurtado et al., 2015).

The presence of assimilation and code switching was prevalent due to the pressures on multiracial students to fit into monoracial standards. Concerning these multiracial identities, Collins (2000) states that there are periods of confusion before coming to a positive identity. The participants are constantly faced with backlash when they don't exhibit the normative ways of only one of their races. Their multiracial identity was not accepted with most of the people they interacted with, and they were constantly under self-pressure to choose one racial affiliation and adhere to the expectations of that affiliation (Romo, 2011).

While these multi-race individuals often acquire a marginal status that gives them a moderate amount of privilege and respect, they are never fully accepted by either the dominant group or their ethnic community (Alba & Nee, 1997). They face rejection from both majority and minority groups in society because they cannot be easily classified into the monoracial minority or monoracial majority groups (Root, 1992). Monoracial stereotypes attempt to categorize, racialize, and fit multiracial peoples into monoracial understandings of race (Harris, 2017).

Additionally, this conclusion also implies the still-current issue of hypodescent in America, which has forced identification with one race to all people (Rockquemore & Brunzman, 2002). It is more commonly known as the “one-drop rule”. Additionally, “because racial categories are defined by appearances, the logical enactment of racial categorization becomes questionable if individuals cannot be identified on sight. One’s skin color, hair, and facial features are strong member cues in socially defined racial groups” (Rockquemore, 1998, p. 204), thus, participants had difficulty staking the claim of their racial identity in school and society when their features differed from that of what society deemed appropriate for their race

**Recommendations.** The research would suggest that everyone should self-reflect and become aware of their personal biases, biases they may not be aware of. Additionally, teachers should raise awareness of monoracism, and how monoracials (both White and People of Color) commit acts of monoracism. This awareness can validate the discriminatory experiences of multiracials, and aid monoracials of their actions (Hamako, 2014).

***Conclusion 5: Multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education programs lack the guidance needed to navigate their racial status, that differs from their monoracial parents, within a monoracial society.***

Being that multiracial students, for the most part, have monoracial parents of two different races, thus have difficulty finding racially similar role models (Townsend et al., 2009), and lack the guidance needed to figure out how to go about their lives as a multiracial individual. The lack of diversity, within both agricultural educators and

members, paired with the lack of multiracial role models, implies a void of multiracial guidance within a predominantly monoracial organization.

These students know how they should act if they were to be one or their races or the other, through the advising of their parents and social expectations, but due to their mixed-heritage there is a lack of a knowledge base of multiracial guidance for them to receive. When communities have similar family structures and offer similar role models, feelings of isolation and alienation are minimized (Brown, 1995). In the findings they are constantly berated on how they should or should not act, depending on how their race is received, yet do not possess mentors to help guide them with how to deal with that. Shih et al. (2007) says it perfectly:

“Because society provides multiracial individuals with no easy answers about where they belong in terms of racial communities, multiracial individuals have been forced to come up with these answers on their own. Thus, they have to grapple with questions surrounding race that many monoracial individuals, both from majority and minority groups, have had answered for them by society.”

Being in an environment where the surrounding society is supportive of racial heritage is imperative. Kerwin et al. (1993) found that, given the proper social environment, children can formulate an integrative sense of racial identity. Collins (2000) found that monoracial categorization of the study’s participants by parents resulted in their lack of acknowledgement and minimal exploration of their multiple heritages. Participants also believed that being able to discuss their racial heritage with their parents influenced a positive biracial identity. Many of the study’s participants are in single-parent households and lacked the guidance of both their parents on racial matters.

**Recommendations.** Similar to the recommendations for Conclusion 2, the researcher recommends that teachers have a PD or training to help assist these students.

Wardle (2000) suggest that training for teachers should cover a variety of topics including:

1. Individual educator's biases.
2. Working effectively with multiracial and multiethnic parents.
3. The history of multiracial and multiethnic people in this country and in the world
4. The overlap between minority issues and unique issues of mixed-race children.
5. The genesis of the racial categories on U.S. census, government, and medical forms, which are nonscientific and unique to the United States.
6. The negative results of focusing strictly on group belonging without also examining individual differences within groups (Lewis & Baker, 1994).
7. Multiethnic and multiracial heroes.
8. Different approaches to help multiracial and multiethnic students become empowered and to effect change in their schools, the media, and their communities.
9. Opposition to acknowledging a fully empowered multiracial and multiethnic identity (Root, 1996).
10. Limitations of current multicultural approaches that often result in the alienation, belittling, and invisibility of children of multiracial and multiethnic identity (Cruz-Janzen, 1997).

Additionally, teachers and parents should be aware of Benedetto and Olisky (2001) three areas of intervention that are designed to promote the development of a healthy multiracial identity in youth, and implement these interventions whenever possible. The first area is awareness. This is the recognition of the various factors related to multiracialism. These factors include individual and societal feelings toward interracial marriages and multiracial births, a familiarity with historical and modern myths and stereotypes, and an appreciation for the advantages and disadvantages of multiracialism.

Second is communication. Communication is facilitating a secure racial identity through the time spent discussing multiracialism. A sense of belonging for multiracial youth may be fostered through promoting and teaching communication skills and increasing self-awareness regarding issues related to them.

Last is exposure. In order to understand their heritage and to acquire culturally linked coping skills, biracial youth need exposure to all aspects of race and ethnicity. It enables them to attain a more realistic attitude and perception about their backgrounds, learn to embrace their identity, and find positive ways to respond to discrimination. A multiracial student will have the benefit of enhanced self-esteem and a well-rounded sense of the world if they feel supported, validated, and accepted in school (Schwartz, 1998).

### **Future Research**

While the data analysis from this study produced many conclusions while exploring the experiences of multiracial graduates of secondary agricultural education programs, there is much to learn about the multiracial community dynamic within agricultural education seeing as it has never been researched before.

Being that multiraciality, especially within the context of Impostor Phenomenon, is such a new topic within agricultural education, future research is vast. Therefore, the researcher proposes several avenues for further research on the topic of multiracial agricultural education students.

First, the researcher proposes that future researchers increase the number of participants interviewed to be able to include a variety of different racial combinations. The reason behind this being that, as stated in the limitations, all the participants had a White parent, and the majority of the participants were of Black-White heritage. Further study of a variety of racial combinations, such as an individual with two minority parents should be researched to determine if they have the same or differing experiences of racial Impostor Phenomenon.

Secondly, future research should include a comparison of those multiracials who possess a culture that speaks a language other than English (i.e. Hispanic/White,

Asian/White, Native American/White) to those who's cultures only speak English. This research could assess if the ability, or lack thereof, to speak one's cultural language impacts the degree of IP compared to those who would not have a second language as a factor.

Another line of research would be to compare the IP feelings of multiracial individuals in rural/suburb/urban FFA chapters -or- comparing those feelings within chapters of low and high racial diversity. This would assess if the racial makeup of the school affects multiracial students' overall feelings of impostorism.

Added to that, research comparing FFA chapters with White, Minority, and Multiracial advisors would be of added value to see the influence the advisors had on the IP feelings of the multiracial students if the advisors were of different races.

### **Concluding Remarks**

I would like to step out of the shoes of the researcher and just speak on behalf of myself. Myself, as an individual who wears many hats. One of those hats being that of a multiracial woman, one hat being an agricultural educator, another hat being a student, one hat of a past FFA member, and one hat that may possibly be a mother of a multiracial child in the future should God allow it.

As a wearer of many hats, I have found that many of these hats happen to be worn at the same time, whether I mean to wear them or not. Those with the possession of many hats see through many lenses at once, purposefully or not. Our hats are who we are.

This study's purpose is very important to me. To me as an agricultural educator, and to me as a multiracial. While conducting this study, it affirmed so many things that I never knew other people experienced and taught me so much about the multiracial community. The findings hit close to home, both as a multiracial and as an educator.



This study also showed me how I can improve in the future. How I can be a great educator, not only to multiracial students, but to all students who identify in a way that others may reject them. As a future educator, I plan to implement everything recommended to others into my own practice. I plan to help and support my future students, not just the multiracial ones, in any way I can. I will try my very best to give support to those students who do not feel represented and do not feel like they have a voice. To accept them as they are and still give them equal opportunities, even if they do not fit the mold expected of them by society.

I will do this by first utilizing the recommendations I gave to others as recommendations for myself. I will also support my students by first being a listening ear. Listening to what they want to identify as; listening to their struggles; listening to their wishes for the class and ag program. Then stepping back, elevating and empowering them by giving them the chance within agricultural education to step up, lead, and let them be a voice box for those around them and those to come after them.

We are all human and we just want to be accepted. Not accepted as the mask we put on for others in fear of rejection. We want to be accepted for who we are as our fullest and *most* authentic self. As educators, we can grant that acceptance.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. IRB APPROVAL LETTER



XP Initial Review

Approval Ends:  
7/8/2021

IRB Number:  
57936

TO: Juliana Gardner, MS  
Community & Leadership Develop  
PI phone: XXX-XXXX  
PI email: Juliana.Gardner@uky.edu

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson  
Nonmedical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol

DATE: 7/9/2020

On 7/9/2020, the Nonmedical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled

Impostor Phenomenon in multiracial students in Agricultural Education

Approval is effective from 7/9/2020 until 7/8/2021 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. In addition to IRB approval, you must also meet the requirements of the [VPR Resumption of Research Phased Plan](#) (i.e., waiver for Phase 1, training & individualized plan submission for Phases 2-4) before resuming/beginning your human subjects research. If applicable, the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects can be found in the "All Attachments" menu item of your IRB application. [Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.] Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review (CR)/Administrative Annual Review (AAR) request which must be completed and submitted to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "[PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research](#)" available in the online Office of Research Integrity's [IRB Survival Handbook](#). Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through [ORI's web site](#). If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

## APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ZOOM Interview Protocol:

Intro:

Hello! My name is Juliana and I just wanted to thank you for giving me your time.

I will be recording this solely for research purposes, so that I can refer back to it. No one will see it.

I am a graduate student here at UKY in Ag Ed. I am multiracial myself, mom is Hispanic and dad White, so I wanted to see if any other biracials have had some of the same experiences that I have.

Here at UK, we have to submit an IRB to determine if a study is fit to go through with and isn't harmful to the participants. I will send that to you to look over.

Questions:

1. Without going too deep into today's topic, tell me about your high school experience. Was it fun? Memorable? Cool? Prepare you for college?
  - a. How would you rate your involvement etc. in FFA/ Ag?
  - b. Did you have a good relationship with your advisor(s)?
  - c. Did you go on the class trips or to events?
2. Now tell me about your family and racial identity
3. Now that we've discussed those two, let's begin to connect the two, your identity and your high school experience.
  - a. Do you have difficulty finding a good balance between X & X? And that is with anything, not just school.
  - b. Do you ever have feelings that one of them is getting more attention or that you're leaving one of them behind?
  - c. Did you ever have experiences where you were forced to leave one behind?
  - d. Did that ever happen in FFA or AgEd?
  - e. Were there ever moments that someone said a comment about one of your racial identities, but did not include you into that racial identity group when they said it?
  - f. Have you ever felt like you had to put aside a part of yourself for the people around you to be comfortable?
4. If you were to walk into a group of your X race right now, what would make you immediately feel a sense of belonging with them?
  - a. What about a feeling of not belonging?

Ending:

Thank you for everything that you've shared. If there's any questions we have later on, would you mind me getting back in touch with you for a follow up interview for any questions that come up later?

Follow Up Questions: (in no particular order)

- Have you ever felt like you don't deserve to claim one of your races because you don't "look" like a member of that race?
- Have you ever felt like it is "wrong" to claim one of your cultures due to lack of (mental) connection to it?
- Have you ever felt like it's wrong for you to claim one of your cultures because you can't read or speak the language?
- Have you ever felt like you are too white-washed to relate to the experience of your others in your culture?
- Has it ever been hard to feel like you are {race} because your parent doesn't even feel {race}?
- Have you ever felt like a fraud whenever you want to claim the culture you that you have the least ties to?
- Have you ever felt fake when you were surrounded or included into a group of monoracials of a single one of your races? (word differently)
  - o Or the one you have the least connection to?
- Have you ever struggled to be {race} enough?
- Have you ever felt like you've had to PROVE to people what you are?
  - o Knowledge, picture of parent, etc.
- Have you ever felt forcefully branded as a single one of your races?
  - o Possibly branded as the one you have the least connection to?
- Have you ever felt like you were able to claim the race you "pass" as more often than the other(s)?
- Have you ever felt like you don't fully fit into a racial group because its values differ from/conflict with those of your other race?
- Have you ever felt like you have the ability (or lack thereof) to navigate successfully between both your races?
- Have you ever felt like people blame/give credit to your downfalls or success due to the fact that you are mixed?
- Have you ever felt that you would be more connected to one of your races/cultures if you could speak its language?
- Have you ever felt like you are a fraud to one of your cultures because you can't FULLY speak the language?
- Have you ever felt rejected as a member of that race/culture due to not being able to speak the language? Whether it's by a member of that culture or not
- Have you ever felt like you are not "doing it right" regarding one of your races/cultures?
- Have you ever felt like someone you just met is trying to figure out "what you are"?
- Have you ever felt like you had to make someone more comfortable by telling them that you're mixed?

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#### **WORK EXPERIENCE**

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Teaching Assistant  
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Falkville High School 2019  
Pre-Service Agricultural Educator

Mississippi State University, Housing Department 2017-2018  
Resident Advisor

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MAFES Student Researcher

#### **POSTERS**

Impostor Phenomenon Among Multiracial Youth in Agricultural Education 2021  
Juliana D. Markham, Tara E. Rojas, Daniel T. Price, & Dr. Stacy K. Vincent  
To Be Presented at: The American Association of Agricultural Educators

The 1619 Project: Sparking Critical Conversation in Agricultural Education 2021  
Caleb M. Hickman, Austin W. Leake, Juliana D. Markham, & Dr. Stacy K. Vincent  
To Be Presented at: The American Association of Agricultural Educators

Defining your Role: Facilitating Experiential Education 2021  
Andrew Hauser, Juliana D. Markham, Audrey Hawk, Hunter Anne Julian,  
Caleb Hickman, Danny Prince, Tara Rojas, Graciela Barajas, Austin Leake  
To Be Presented at: The American Association of Agricultural Educators

Not Horsin' Around: Learning Mathematics the Horse Way 2020  
Juliana D. Gardner, Jacelyn D. Nesmith, Andrew Hauser, & Rebekah B. Epps  
Presented at: The Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists