

Nguyen, L., Urias, G., Lynn, A., Smith, N., Do, M., Armstrong, C., de la Rosa, P., & Ihorn, S. (2022). Imposter Syndrome in Historically Underrepresented Students: A Qualitative Study. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Portland, OR.

Imposter syndrome is a phenomenon that occurs when individuals experience a sense of inadequacy due to perceived lack of intelligence or capabilities, and worry that they have only achieved success because they have fooled people into thinking otherwise (Clance & Imes, 1978). Imposter syndrome has been found to mediate the relationship between perceived discrimination and mental health in underrepresented minority groups (Cokley et al., 2017), indicating that imposter syndrome may have more negative consequences for minority students. Computer Science (CS) programs have long struggled with issues of equity and diversity, and Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and female scientists are critically underrepresented in university CS major programs (Cohoon & Aspray, 2016). Further research on the experience of imposter syndrome for underrepresented minority students in CS is needed to identify risk and protective factors and expand our knowledge on how to support minority students in CS programs to close the CS equity gap.

The present study uses interviews and qualitative analysis to understand the experience of imposter syndrome for underrepresented minority students in a novel computer science minor program. This minor program was created to address issues of representation within the CS field, and it recruits underrepresented students, provides scholarships and mentorship, and incorporates research-based, anti-racist teaching pedagogy into course curriculum.

Due to disruptions because of COVID-19, data analysis for this study has been delayed and is still in progress. Eight students have participated. Interviews have been transcribed and are in the process of being analyzed using consensus coding paired with an integrated (inductive/deductive) method of code development outlined by Bradley, Curry, & Devers (2007). A team of eight coders are working to analyze all interview transcripts. We plan to have all analysis completed by February 2022. Initial findings appear to indicate that students in the minor program experience feelings concordant with imposter syndrome, but the negative impact of these feelings is mitigated by the support provided by the program, particularly near-peer mentorship and close, positive relationships with faculty members who teach program courses. Expanded discussion and implications for practice will be presented.