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Her Melanin: Creating Courageous Conversations for Combating Imposter Syndrome for Black Women in Higher Education

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Her Melanin: Creating Courageous Conversations for Combating Imposter Syndrome for Black

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Dedication

I dedicate my work to the Black women who have doubted themselves. You are ENOUGH and You are right where you are supposed to be. I dedicate my work to all the Black women pursuing their dreams, trust that inner goddess she will not fail you, trust your intuition. I want to dedicate my work to my younger self; you stayed the path now it's time to do the work.

To my father, Gerald D. Wright 11/24/1955 - 02/21/2020

You have and always be my biggest supporter and cheerleader. Thank you for all the long nights and early mornings that have gotten me. Good Vibes

– Your Ragamuffin

iii

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Abstract

Black women are constantly overlooked within higher education institutions, which is influenced by the systematic racism and sexism embedded in our society and higher education practices. My thematic concern looks to help Black female students understand, process, and overcome the feelings of imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern of doubting one's accomplishments, causing a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud. This occurs when societal expectations of one's identity does not align with their own. Using the methodology of critical action research, I analyze how external factors of intersecting oppression influence Black women to experience imposter syndrome. *Her Melanin* is a potential solution to help Black female students overcome their experience of imposter syndrome.

Keywords: Black Women; Imposter syndrome; Higher education

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction & Positionality

"I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change…I'm changing the things I cannot accept."

– Angela Davis

Women, more than men, face imposter syndrome; however, Black women face imposter syndrome at a higher rate than any other racial group. Imposter syndrome is a psychological term for when someone experiences an internal struggle between their identity and society's influence and expectations. As humans, we all go through moments in our lives where we have felt like an imposter or a fraud, whether in a professional or personal matter. The experience of imposter syndrome is personal for me: over the past three years, I have encountered this phenomenon and learned more about myself and the impact it can have. I have also learned about how imposter syndrome affects others, where it comes from, and how scholars have taken and redefined imposter syndrome with a specifically intersectional lens.

Imposter syndrome is a psychological term created based on the research by two psychologists, Clance and Imes (1978), that will be treated later (see Chapter 2). While imposter syndrome is an experience of internal struggle, it most often presents itself as a feeling of phoniness or being a fraud. Take a moment and think about a time in your life where you felt like a fraud. What are some memories that come to mind? For me there are a plethora! Before continuing further, I introduce myself and the inspiration for this critical action research project.

My name is Nzingha Maya Wright. No, I am not African, but I am Black American. I was born and raised in Philadelphia to my wonderful parents Gerald and Stephanie Wright, five years after my arrival; I was blessed with the sister I did not ask for, but do not know where I would be without her. I have benefited from having college-educated parents that always

encouraged me to follow my dreams and goals. From a very young age, I was taught that education was important. At the time I did not understand why but thought it would give me the keys to success. Since education was important to my parents, I was encouraged to matriculate through elementary school, graduate from high school, attend, and graduate from college. Schooling was not an option but an expectation within my household. My formal education started at John Story Jenks Elementary School (K-8, and then continued at Constitution High School where I graduated in 2014. afterwards, I graduated from Widener University with a B.A in Sociology in 2018.

In light of my educational background, I have often wondered about how, as a society, we can better understand the relationship between the past and the inevitability of change. In short, how can we plan for the future, if we have yet to truly learn from the past? This does not only relate to history lessons but can be applied throughout life. As someone who has felt and seen the effects of imposter syndrome, I find it important to learn from those experiences to better situate myself for the future. Thus, in this thesis, I will reflect on the treatment and exclusion that has happened for Black women within higher education (see Chapter 3).

In this chapter, I will present and discuss three memories that inspired my thematic concern. The guiding question for this thesis is: how can Student Affairs assist in combating imposter syndrome in Black women pursuing a higher education degree? In the following sections I will share how my past influences my present and future self, and the lessons I have learned about myself that inform my thematic concern and program intervention. These are presented in three moments: the transition from elementary to high school, college, and post-undergraduate.

Memory #1: John Story Jenks

My first memorable experience with imposter syndrome happened during my transition from elementary school to high school. As I stated previous, my parents were major advocates about public school education. When it came time for me to attend elementary school, they did not want to send me to our neighborhood elementary school in Germantown, Philadelphia, PA. Recently I found out that there were two main factors of low standardized test scores and the community that surrounds it. They petitioned for me to attend an elementary school in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA. This was a process because in the public school system you are required to attend the school within your neighborhood. With the help from a friend that worked for the district, I was allowed to attend J. S. Jenks. At this time Jenks was a predominantly white school due to its location. When I attended, I did not fully understand race, so I thought the difference between my peers and I was where we lived. As I grew older, I became aware of how race played a factor in the treatment of myself compared to my peers.

Fast-forward to my last year at Jenks, we just received a new guidance counselor. At this time he was the pointed-person to assist us in applying to high school. During my process of applying to high schools, I ran into more problems than my peers. He gave me misinformation about the schools I was applying to and at one point he deliberately withheld information from me. This left me feeling hopeless and unworthy to continue my education journey. While he was giving me misinformation, he would constantly tell me that I would be better off just attending Germantown High School (my neighborhood high school) and I could transfer after my first year. I finally brought it to my parents' attention, they called a meeting with the guidance counselor. In that meeting it came to light the misinformation he was giving me and the seed he tried to plant. After this meeting my parents took time to help me to apply to my preferred high school and find

correct information. I eventually was admitted to and attended Constitution High School (Con High). In the first year of Con High, I had this underlying feeling of not belonging, like the school made a mistake. This was the first time I felt like a fraud, in my mind I did not deserve to attend this special admit school. Even though I had been admitted on my own merits, the treatment by my counselor affected my self-imagine. After reflection, I learned that I would have to continue being my own advocate and not allow others to define who I am or what I am capable of.

Memory #2: Widener University

My second memorable experience of imposter syndrome rearing its ugly head was during my undergraduate career. Widener University, a local private, four-year institution located in nearby Chester, PA, afforded me many amazing opportunities to learn and grow as both a student leader and an individual. Many of these opportunities were from within the Office of Student Life. In my third year, I was heavily involved as President of the Intercultural Greek Council, Campus Collaboration Coordinator for the Activities Board, and Fraternity and Sorority Life Specialist. These leadership experiences allowed me to work with many different student leaders and professionals.

As the seasonal transition of student leaders was in full swing in the Office of Student Life, I remember having a conversation with my mentor around the topic of there being a lack of diversity within student leadership. This conversation led me to investigate why there was a lack of diversity within student leadership. I received numerous reasons from each student that I talked to and included: (1) my peers needed to work to afford to attend Widener and therefore did not have the time to serve in leadership, (2) they felt unwelcome to join organizations outside of the Black Student Union and other organizations focused on their racial identity, and (3) they felt

that they did not belong at Widener and that the university only wanted their money. Many of these factors stem from Widener being both a private institution and a PWI. At the time the university did little to nothing to make Black students feel welcome and retain these students.

These informal conversations also pushed me to ask the opposite question: why did the few student leaders of color pursue their leadership positions? In subsequent conversations with peers, I found that the answers I received were very similar to the reasons why I, too, became a student leader. These reasons were: (1) to change the opinions of professors and other students about Black students, and (2) to create opportunities for others to follow. The former is an example of stereotype threat, which is when an individual feels at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about one's social group. The latter is part of the inspiration for my research study.

With the findings of my informal case study, I realized the lack of support that many Black students face on campus. My informal case study made me appreciative of my mentors and others who took me under their wings. In light of my experience, I made a promise that wherever my journey took me, I would always work towards change and create opportunities for others like me to come after me. It broke my heart at the time because in my view the university's job is to make students feel wanted and welcome to learn freely.

Though at that time I did not personally feel imposter syndrome, I can acknowledge that many of my peers were experiencing it. They were in a situation where they felt that they did not belong but were only allowed to stay because the university had quota requirements to meet. After this conversation, a stir within me wanted to find a way to improve the currently Black students who interacted with the university and student leadership. When I expressed the desire to make these changes my father suggested that I inquire into what my mentors did in Student Affairs.

Memory #3: Adams State University

My third but not least memorable experience imposter syndrome happened after graduating from Widener University. I stumbled across a gap year internship during my last semester. The internship was at Adams State University in Alamosa, CO. I was one of three program assistants, and in my role, I worked directly with the Student Government and multicultural organization/programming. This was a perfect opportunity for me to get my feet wet within the Student Affairs world. I would also be able to meet new people and have experience within another university environment. When I was accepted into this role, I was ecstatic about this new experience and where it will take me.

In the year I spent at Adams State, I was able to develop as a young professional as well as a person. Being a Black woman moving from a big city to a small town in the middle of a valley, there was a lot of culture shock. I did not let it change my goals of learning everything I could. Early on, I observed that Adams State's faculty and staff demographic did not match the student population demographic. My experience set in motion a recurring question of: "Does the lack of diversity at Adams State have an effect on the students sense of belonging?" As my relationships with my students progressed so did my understanding of the student experience. What I learned from my students confirmed my prediction, that many of the students felt tokenized and had a sense of not belonging. This inspired me to learn and work to make sure all the students I work with feel welcomed.

From this realization, I started to question why I was at Adams? Was I a diversity hire? How do others (staff/faculty) see me? I even started to feel responsible to speak for Black people because I felt no one else did. To this day I catch myself questioning whether I deserved to be at Adams and it's been three years.

Connection to Thematic Concern

My personal experience of imposter syndrome is what is guiding me to want to understand this phenomenon. I want to understand this more deeply so that I can in turn provide assistance to the future students I will work with and, specifically, Black women to help them overcome these feelings. My thematic concern is inspired by my passion to help change the system for Black women who will come after me. As I have learned more about student development theory and reflected on this observance after my time at Adams, I have realized how important it is for student's development that they see themselves within the makeup of the university. During my first year of graduate school and while I was selecting my topic, I started with these questions: How can the university better prepare Black women for life? What tools/resources are available to Black women? How can college students be taught about imposter syndrome? These are a few of the questions that guided me while I began researching my thematic concern.

When I identified my thematic concern, I realized that I could connect my passion and interests together. The intersectionality of *who* I am has caused me to consistently question *why* I am *where* I am. Though my memories are my own, I know that I am not the only one, and most certainly, not the only Black woman, to have experienced something like imposter syndrome. I hope that my thesis will be only the beginning of the conversation for those who experience imposter syndrome.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the positionality of my thematic concern, what has inspired me to pursue the research, and who I am relative to my concern. Three memories were discussed as

path markers through my personal experience that highlighted my own lived encounters with imposter syndrome.

In this critical action research thesis, I begin first by introducing my philosophy of education before considering the role of student affairs, critical action research as a methodology, and important definitions. Chapter 3 reviews the historical context of my thematic concern, relevant conceptual and philosophical frameworks, and connections to student development and other related theories (e.g., Black feminism, critical race). The culmination of the thesis is my intervention, *Her Melanin*, which is introduced in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of program implementation and considerations for the future.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

"Schooling is what happens inside the walls of the school, some of which is educational. Education happens everywhere, and it happens from the moment a child is born and some people say before -- until a person dies." - Sara Lawrence Lightfoot

As I shared in the introductory chapter, my education has been influenced by my parents, because in my household education was the key to success. Growing up I equated education with working, a job, and money. These ideas shaped my conception of education as a building block to prepare me for my career future. However, as I have developed as an individual, my idea of education changed. In this chapter, I explain how the purpose of education influences my philosophy of education, the role of student affairs and student affairs practitioners, and how critical action research (CAR) influences my thematic concern.

Philosophy of Education

At its core, education should give the tools necessary for students in their development of self, understanding of the world around them, and how they fit within society. Education should also be a journey where the student is an active participant in their understanding, development, and experiences. In addition, and maybe more importantly, education should be a liberating experience that prompts individual thinking and understanding as a form of liberation and freedom. Below, I share my influences from higher education as they impact my philosophy of education. I also contrast these ideas with the dominant pedagogies that exist in what I call traditional education.

My philosophy of education is drawn from and focused on the higher education experience, as opposed to K-12 settings. Higher education institutions play a vital part in our society by

educating students, prompting self-growth, cultivating community, and creating educational experiences. These institutions should provide a problem-posing education that "affirms men and women as being in the process of becoming -- as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 1968, p. 84). Education is not just the professor teaching the student but the student as teaching the professor, creating a cycle of education. The cycles of learning should influence students to come to their own understanding instead of being told simply what is right and wrong. My personal experience has led me to believe that education is a process where knowledge is exchanged in both formal and informal settings. My philosophy of education has been influenced by Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and John Dewey. They each used a critical lens to present a vision of education that addresses and improves student's learning ability and development.

Before explaining my view of education, it is useful to review how education currently exists. In traditional education, the teacher is given the responsibility of creating experiences for the students to learn and develop within the classroom. In recent years education has become about test scores and rankings and rather than the development of students. This form of education allows for a power dynamic to be created between teacher and student which can cause limitations to the development of students. Since education influences and affects our society, these miseducative experiences allow for the cycle of dominance to continue within our society. Traditional education has been proven to perpetuate the cycle of dominance that hinders student progress and keeps people oppressed.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire makes a connection between traditional education and banking education based on the teacher-student relationship. The narrators (teachers) narrate content to fill containers (students) (Freire, 1968). The "'banking' concept of education, in which

the scope of action allowed to the students extended only as far as receiving, filing, and storing deposits" (Freire, 1968, p. 72). The banking model causes students to only know what their teacher is willing to teach them. This concept hinders student's ability to be critical thinkers and active members of society. Freire argues that a problem-posing approach to education is necessary to allow for students to develop their own understanding.

Similar to Freire, bell hooks (1994) illustrates that education should be a liberating experience that can be equated to freedom of original thought:

> If we examine critically the traditional role of the university in the pursuit of truth and the shared knowledge and information, it is painfully clear that biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism have distorted education so that it no longer about the practice of freedom. (p. 29)

The way to create these liberating experiences is to call for traditional education to reflect on their current pedagogies and how they reaffirm the ideology of oppressed or power. By implementing problem-posing pedagogies, it will transform education to dispute the power of questioning to everyone and limit the use of the banking model obsolete. With students given the power to be critical thinkers it transforms education to be a lifelong process as well as a collective process.

In *Experiences and Education,* Dewey demonstrates that there is a connection between personal experiences and education which can be helpful for the growth and development of a student (1963). But he also points out that "Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. Some experiences are miseducative. Any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of future experience" (1963, p. 62). Applied to higher education, if a student has a miseducative experience it can hinder the future development

associated with this experience. Traditional education, in itself, is an example of a miseducative experience. These experiences that students face have lasting impacts on the student and society.

Freire, hooks and Dewey believe that education is a very important aspect of human development, and that to reach full development students should hold power equal to the teacher. It is also important for the teacher to have the ability to teach their students both the master narrative and the counternarratives, allowing their students to develop their own understanding. Higher education institutions have the responsibility to their students to expose them to new ideas, cultures, options, themselves. This is why my philosophy of education is that education should be both an individual and collective progress of critical thinking, discussing, and growth.

The Role of Student Affairs

The purpose of higher education is to give students a holistic experience from learning about their future career paths to becoming their own person. In higher education, there are two different entities to support students: academic affairs and student affairs. The former works with students to help with their matriculation through the institution and guide them into their career paths. The latter is student affairs which work to meet students' needs outside of the classroom by creating programs, developing policies, and cultivating a welcoming environment for all students. Outside of the classroom, student affairs practitioners are tasked with creating developmental opportunities and experiences. Student affairs practitioners utilize numerous student development theories to help shape student experiences and growth.

In Chapter 3, I will examine the two theoretical frameworks and three student development theories that have influenced my thematic concern and program intervention. As an upcoming student affairs professional, it is important to be able to apply student development

theories to practice. Specifically, I will examine one of the commonly used development theories for my topic of Black women. Schlossberg's (1989) theory of mattering and marginality, improves students' education experience by bringing a more holistic view to student development. By emphasizing the need for students to feel that they matter to the university especially students that have historically been denied access to traditional education. A theoretical framework used when exploring Black women in higher education is Delgado & Stefancic's Critical Race Theory (2012) which challenges the current structures of the ideologies of the master narrative by centering the teachings around the counter narrative and advocating for allowing the students to be the barrier of knowledge. As I conducted my research into my thematic concern, I found that many of the student development theories are not inclusive of Black women and their lived experiences. Chapter 3 will give a more in-depth look at these theories and the connection to my thematic concern and program intervention.

Critical Action Research (CAR)

Similar to a problem-posing education, critical action research (CAR) is a "systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives" (Stinger, 2014, p. 1). Using the problem-posing framework, CAR is different from traditional experimental or quantitative research. Its methodology centers around community-based practices. As a future educator, CAR is important to better understand the student experience, what theory/methods work, and to hopefully enact solutions to problems and/or issues students may experience. Here I briefly consider the use of CAR as it applies to my thematic concern, which is how to combat imposter syndrome in Black women pursuing a higher education degree.

Stinger (2014) outlines how to conduct action research using a basic action research routine which requires the researcher to constantly *Look* (gather data/describe concern), *Think* (analyze data, theorize solution), and *Act* (create plan, implementation plan and evaluate). These steps help guide problem-posing research. As the "researcher" I am gathering my understanding of how imposter syndrome affects Black female students and what student affairs can do that can address this problem. In Chapter 3, I consult the literature on the systematic oppression that Black women students experience in higher education to help me theorize around this problem further. And, in Chapter 4, I will propose a possible solution, or a *plan* in CAR terminology, to address the problem. Chapter 5 will evaluate the proposed solution is effective and prepare me for the next cycle of CAR through a discussion of future goals.

Definitions

Table 2. 1 Key Terms and Definitions

Black Feminist Thought (BFT)	"A form of critical social theory committed to justice for the collective population of Black women and other oppressed groups. The premise of BFT centers around empowerment of Black women and the assertion of their voices as central to their experiences, while also recognizing and supporting coalitions with other social justice (Patton, 2009, p. 516)
Educational experience	An experience that will be able to be cumulatively to other experiences, which promotes growth and learning from the experience. This encourages for repeats of the experience.
Imposter syndrome	A psychological pattern of doubting one's accomplishments, causing a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud.
Intersectionality	the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups

Miseducational experience	An experience that can not be linked cumulatively to another experience because of a negative barrer blocking need or want to try again.
Self-Authorship	"the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity and social relations" (Baxter Magoloda, 2001, p.268).
Stereotype threat	"being at risk of confirming as self-characteristic a negative stereotype about one's group. It focuses on a social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one's group" (Aronson & Steele, 1995, p. #)."

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed my philosophy of education and how it has been heavily influenced by three philosophers, Freire, hooks, and Dewey. I also summarized how CAR influenced the creation of my thesis, and ultimately my program intervention. I closed with a listing of important definitions of key terms that are used throughout this thesis. I turn next to relevant selections from research literature relevant to my thematic concern.

Chapter 3: Historical & Literature Review

"You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been."

-Maya Angelou

In this chapter, I provide historical background and support from the research literature that is the foundation of this action research thesis. I begin by providing a brief historical synopsis of the university in the United States. Then, the progress of Black Americans, and specifically Black women, in the United States is presented in the context of the present moment. The next section addresses the Black female experience in higher education, with particular attention paid to connections with higher education and student affairs theories and scholarship. I conclude by briefly describing my own connection to this topic before transitioning to Chapter 4, where I provide a student organization intervention as a possible solution.

Higher education is a privilege; not everyone has the opportunity to further their learning because of historical limitations placed on them. However, capitalism has influenced higher education to be the breeding ground of neoliberal ideas. In our society, there is a bar set that if you want to make it you need to have at least a bachelor's degree. To begin, we turn first to the history of the university in the United States.

Historical Context

In this section, we will take a journey through the history of my thematic concern which will serve as a foundation. I will give the history of historically White Institutions (HWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as well as relevant psychology research on imposter syndrome. However, I want to start this section by acknowledging all of the enslaved African and Native Americans that were forced to build these higher education institutions, the

universities of the United States. My thematic concern is related to how to combat imposter syndrome in Black women who are pursuing a higher education degree at PWIs. History is important because it teaches us to recognize if change happens.

A note on terminology is important. Historically white institutions must not be confused with predominantly white institutions (PWIs), a phrase common in higher education scholarship today. All universities in the United States were originally created as white universities. Colleges and universities that were created by and for Black Americans are typically called Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Predominantly white Institutions can be defined as an institution where more than 50% of the student population identifies as white. Thus, this should not be confused with historically white institutions which means that the university in its history only allowed or admitted white students.

After colonizers (European settlers) settled in America, they started to build our current society. The early colleges in America were founded by different religious denominations to educate ministers, to spread their word to the Native peoples of America and the other lands that they conquered. The first higher education institution was established in 1636 by the legislature to focus on training ministers, Harvard College. At this time only white men were allowed to receive formal education because it was believed that women were only supposed to cater to their husbands and if you were not white you were deemed as less than human.

In *Ebony & Ivy*, Wilder (2013) takes the reader on a journey through the history of American universities. It is agreed upon historians that "The founding, financing, and development of higher education in the colonies were thoroughly intertwined with the economic and social forces that transformed West and Central Africa through the slave trade and devastated indigenous nations in the Americas" (Wilder, 2013, pg. 2). The genocide of Native people continued many years after. For enslaved Africans, "freedom" was not granted until June 19,

1863 when the news of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation reached all southern plantations.

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, many former slaves wanted to pursue formal education. In 1865 the 13th amendment was passed that abolished slavery in the US. Unfortunately, many southern white Americans still felt that Black people should not have the same rights as them which inspired the creation of Black Codes and the Jim Crow era. These laws systematically hindered Black individuals from receiving a quality education, having voting rights, owning land, and other basic human rights. These racist systemic foundations are the foundation America and its higher education institutions were built on.

Between the 19th and mid-20th centuries, many external barriers continued to hinder the descendants of African slaves, especially with regard to formal education. The barriers that Black people faced led to the creation of History Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The first higher education institution was created outside of the south because during slavery Black slaves were not allowed to read or write. Each school was created to provide undergraduate and graduate level education to the descendants of African slaves. In 1837, the first HBCU was founded as the Institute for Colored Youth, or Cheyney University as it is currently known. Following the founding of Cheyney University, Lincoln University and Wilberforce University were also founded in 1854 and 1856, respectively.

At present, there are approximately 104 HBCUs that have more than 228,000 students enrolled. Earlier, I mentioned that if we as a society wanted to make a change, we needed to understand where we came from. Since I am working towards bringing awareness to the lack of attention there is for Black women within higher education, I need to explain how Black women have been systematically excluded through history and the university.

Women's colleges were created in response to the exclusion of women from higher education. When white women fought for the right to pursue higher education there was a debate on whether or not educating women would destroy the woman's role in the home or strengthen the women's role. The most well-known women's colleges are the Seven Sisters which is the nickname given to seven liberal arts women's colleges that have the equivalent educational rigor as Ivy League colleges, which were historical male institutions (see Table 3.1 below). Though these colleges were created for white women, Black women were still excluded from attending these all-female colleges and universities.

Table 3. 1 Seven Liberal Arts Women's College

Seven Sisters	Location	Chartered in
Mount Holyoke College	South Hadley, Massachusetts	1888
Smith College	Northampton, Massachusetts	1871
Wellesley College	Wellesley Massachusetts	1836
Bryn Mawr College	Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania	1885
Barnard College	Manhattan, New York	1889
Vassar College	Poughkeepsie, New York	1861
Radcliffe College	Cambridge, Massachusetts	1894

The first Black woman to attend and graduate from a higher education institution was Mary Jane Patterson, from Oberlin College but at the time known as Oberlin Collegiate Institute. The Oberlin Collegiate Institute was founded by the Rev. John J. Shipherd and Philo P. Stewart in 1833. In the institute's early history it was one of the few colleges that admitted both white

men and women, without scrutiny of their gender. As time progressed Oberlin College became one of the few HWIs that also admitted Black men and women to pursue a bachelor's degree.

After Mary Jane Patterson graduated, word traveled across the US creating a migration to Ohio. Black families that wanted their children, and especially their daughters, to have an education moved to Ohio to attend Oberlin College. Black women that attended college wanted to use their education to help with the advancement of those who are oppressed by society. This caused Black women to pursue degrees related to education. Though racist and sexist ideals were still within our society norms. For Black women, their education improved the Black communities. This was in the form of positions of power and change like teacher, principal and others. In this section I explored the history of academic exclusion of Black women and in the next section I discuss its effects on current Black women pursuing higher education.

Black Female Experience in Higher Education at Present

In the 21st century, Black women are still impacted by the ideologies of racism and sexism which remain embedded within higher education culture. These societal norms have a profound impact on Black women and their development. In this section I explore the current state of Black females' experience within higher education. I also discuss how external factors such as racism and sexism have impacted Black women's experience of imposter syndrome.

In recent years, Black women have been in the news because they have been named the most educated ranked by race and gender. These claims come from the reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The annual reports note that Black women have the highest rate of enrollment compared to other groups (NCES, 2018). These reports *do not* show the full picture because though Black women are enrolled at a higher rate there are still gaps between having a degree and a career. According to NCES, in 2018-2019 about 44% of Black women earned a Bachelor's degree, but only 19,603 were employed (NCES, 2019; *Job market*

remains tight in 2019, as the unemployment rate falls to its lowest level since 1969: Monthly Labor Review 2020). What is often misunderstood, however, is the impact that race and gender have on Black women that are theorized within the concept of intersectionality.

To understand the constant struggle Black women face between their race and gender, Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality. Crenshaw (1991) describes intersectionality as follows:

> Many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately. (p. 1244)

Intersectionality helps with understanding how Black women's experience is unique compared to Black men and white women. Black women were excluded from both the Civil Rights movement and the Feminist movement. Even though these movements were able to create progress in American society, Black women are still caught between two worlds which can be very harmful to their development and progress as a group.

While as a society there has been progress, Black women are still slipping through the cracks within higher education. We know this because research chronicles the trends of higher education enrollment and the assessment of the workforce. With the increase of Black people and especially Black women attending higher education, society has started to question if Black women even need extra support with matriculating through higher education.

The "Model Minority"

Kaba (2008) questioned the continual isolation Black women have historically felt from society. Specifically, he posed the question: "Are Black American women the new model

minority?" Model minority was originally coined by sociologist William Peterson (1966) in his article *Success Story: Japanese American style.* The term was originally used to describe immigrants to the US but specifically used in references to Asian Americans. Peterson highlighted the family structure and the cultural dedication to hard work which helped Japanese Americans overcome the discrimination against their group by white Americans and achieve a certain level of success in the US.

The term model minority in the US is defined as "groups that were at one time marginalized, educationally, economically, and socially, but eventually rose up despite their many obstacles to become prosperous, admired, and even emulated" (Kaba, 2008, pg. 310). Kaba gave six reasons for why Black women are the new minority:

1. Relatively high college enrollment and degree attainment rates for Black women

2. Fewer Black females die per every 100,000 of their population than Black males, white men, and white females.

3. Higher proportion of Black women 100 years and over, compared to Black males and whites.

4. Proportionally, fewer Black females than Black males, white males, and white females commit suicide.

5. Proportionally, fewer Black females than all males commit crimes

6. Proportionally, due largely to Black females, fewer blacks consume alcohol and illicit drugs than whites, etc. Kaba, 2008, p. #

In response to Kaba's claims, other Black women scholars responded that Kaba's "use of the hegemonic device of 'model minority' endangers the support, advocacy, and visibility that

undergraduate Black women deserve as they choose, matriculate, and complete college…It also discredits the multiple ways in which they are marginalized within education and society" (Croom, Haynes & Patton, 2017, p. 141). It is predicted that by the year 2025 about 60% of the US population that identify as a person of color will be the majority (Zamani, 2003) which means that the minority will eventually become the majority entering higher education. It best supports these students, especially Black women, to understand how we can best support their higher education journey.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat also affects Black women's experience in higher education and society. Stereotype threat is defined as:

Stereotype threat is being at risk of confirming as self-characteristic a negative stereotype about one's group. It focuses on a social-psychological predicament that can arise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one's group. It is this: existence of a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one's features that confirm to it make the stereotype more plausible as self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes. (Aronson & Steele, 1995)

Steele (1995) argued that after a lifetime of exposure to society's negative images of their ability, students who experience stereotype threat are likely to consistently experience internalized anxiety. Stereotype threat is significant because, for example, when a Black woman walks into a room her identity is already always on display in her embodiment. She is conscious of how society sees and expects her to behave, act, and speak and this impacts how she acts in the room. These experiences can heighten anxiety within Black women as they strive to challenge this phenomenon.

One stereotype of Black women in society is that they are strong, they don't need help, and they will figure out any problems on their own. The traditional stereotypes that also affect Black people in general also play a factor. These stereotypes of Black women also show up in academia. In classrooms many Black women "tip toe" around sharing their personal feelings for the comfort of others to avoid confrontation and fulfill the threat of stereotype. Aronson and Steele note: "This threat can befall anyone with a group identity about which some negative stereotype exists, and for the person to be threatened in this way, [s]he need not even believe the stereotype" (p. 798). The external pressures of not conforming to stereotypes by Black women can cause internal struggles that can lead to feelings of imposter syndrome.

Imposter Phenomenon

Imposter syndrome is the crux of this action research thesis. In 1978 psychologists Clance and Imes studied and coined the term imposter phenomenon which today is known as imposter syndrome. They wanted to understand why high-performing women experienced an internal feeling of being a failure even though they were classified as successful. Their study focused on a sample of 150 women in the United States across different educational levels and professions. The sample included primarily white women who were middle- to upper-class and were between the ages of 20 to 45. Imposter phenomenon is "used to designate an internal experience of intellectual phoniness" (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241).

They further found that many high-achieving women felt like an "imposter". The women had a strongly held belief that they were not intelligent and had fooled or tricked others to think otherwise. Individuals who experience imposter syndrome reported symptoms like "anxiety, lack of self-confidence, depression, and frustration related to the inability to meet self-imposed standards of achievement" (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 242). In this period there were different

expectations between men and women based on gender roles, and therefore stereotypes of gender caused women to have a lower expectation for themselves compared to their male counterparts. This was confirmed by Dexux (1976) who conducted a study on how men and women attribute success. She found that "women tend to attribute their successes to temporary causes, such as luck or effort, in contrast to men who are much more likely to attribute their success to the internal, stable factor of ability" (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 242).

Clance & Imes (1978) observed that the "imposter" fell into two groups that were influenced by the women's family dynamic. In the first group were women who had been told or labeled as less intelligent than compared to a sibling or another family member. In the second group were women who had been labeled by family as superior in every part of their lives. Though Black women were not the participants in this study, they have been labeled as less intelligent compared to other racial groups and genders throughout history. These labels, such as being "less intelligent', have affected Black women's image in society and how they see themselves. This, then, is an additional overlap between imposter syndrome and stereotype threat. "Internalized into a self-stereotype the societal sex-role stereotype that they are not considered competent" (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 242).

From Clance & Imes' study, there are four behaviors that maintain the imposter syndrome. These behaviors can be seen throughout the Black women's experience which is why this must be addressed when talking about Black women. These behaviors include: (1) being diligent and hardworking, (2) feeling a sense of phoniness which is based in part in reality, (3) using charm and perceptiveness to win the approval of superiors, (4) and conforming to society's expectations of women (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 244-245).

After reviewing the history of my thematic concern, I have learned that I have only scratched the surface of African American women within Higher Education. From what I have uncovered, Black women are very resilient even in the face of adversity. As I continue my research on Black women within Higher Education, I hope to find more about how imposter syndrome affects the retention rate of this population.

Relevant Factors from HESA Literature

With a brief foundation of the history of my thematic concern presented, relevant literature within higher education is considered next. In this section, I will talk about the theories that have influenced my research and the student development theories that have informed my thesis. These theoretical frameworks help to ground the intervention that is presented in Chapter 4.

Influential Theories

The focus of this action research thesis is Black women in higher education. There is a lack of research centered around Black women students. In understanding the experience of Black women within higher education there are two theories that have been influential in my pursuit of helping combat imposter syndrome in Black women as they matriculate through higher education: Black Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory. As a student affairs practitioner, I will also be giving my critique of current student development theories which have influenced my thinking and intervention planning. The student development theories that I will explore are Mattering & Marginality, Transition Theory, and Theory of Self Authorship.

Black Feminist Theory

During the second wave of the Feminist movement, the plight of Black women were being ignored and excluded from the demands of the movement. This influenced the creation of

the Black feminist movement that led to the development of Black Feminist Theory (BFT). BFT highlights and addresses the nuanced experiences of oppressive forces among women. It also emphasizes the use of personal narratives and vulnerability as vehicles for change (Collins, 2002). There are three key themes of BFT: (1) The personal narratives of Black women act as a framework for engaging in praxis while simultaneously empowering them as writers of their own story; (2) The narratives and experiences of each woman are nuanced and multidimensional; (3) Intersecting identities of Black women should be considered in the understanding of their experiences (Collins, 2002).

With accessibility to postsecondary education expanding, so should the practices and pedagogical approaches to meeting the diverse demands of students. Understanding perspectives is an essential step to formulating practices for the development of students. My intervention utilizes the components of BFT by providing Black women a space to process, share, and self-reflect on experiences within their institution.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory "is a perspective that emphasizes the centrality of race and racism and challenges white supremacy in the law, education, politics, and other social systems" (student development book, pg. 27). Critical race theorists advocate the centering of their voices through counter-narratives and counterstorytelling. For example, students of color are recognized as creators and holders of the knowledge they communicate through their counterstories (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This will be woven into the fabric of the mission and program goals of the intervention. CRT will also be demonstrated in the end of year showcase which will give Black female students the chance to talk about their experiences in many kinds of artistic ways.

Student Development Theories

Student development theories were created to give student affairs practitioners a foundation to understand student experience. For this critical action research thesis these are used as foundational practices but not adhered to in a strict fashion. What is interesting to note about these student development theories is how they occur within Howard-Hamilton's (2003) description of Black women's experience of polarization and exclusion:

> "This marginality is viewed as the "outsider within" status on which black women have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences. A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American women and the dominant group" (p. 21).

Pushing back on and critiquing these theories is addressed within each theories' subsection.

Mattering & Marginality

The first student development theory examined is Mattering and Marginality. Schlossberg (1989a) describes: "When individuals feel marginalized, they worry if they matter to anyone" (p. 9). She continues: "Mattering is our belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else" (1989a, pg. 9). According to Schlossberg, there are five parts of mattering: attention, importance, ego-extension, dependence, and appreciation. The challenge is that Mattering and Marginality is wonderful for students as a whole, but as student affairs professionals, students should always matter to us and our interactions should not depend on societal norms.

Transition Theory

The second development theory is transition theory. A transition is "any event or non-event, [which] results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Goodman,

Schlossberg & Angerson, 2006, p. 33). There are three types of transitions: (1) Anticipated transitions that occur predictably, (2) Unanticipated transitions that are not predictable or scheduled, and (3) Non-events which are transitions that are expected but do not occur (Goodman et al, 2006, p. 33). "While a transition may be precipitated by a single event or non- event, dealing with a transition is a process that extends over time" (Patton et al., 2016,p. 38). There are four major factors that influence an individual's ability to cope with transitions: Situation, self, support, and strategies, or the 4 S's (Goodman et al., 2006). For Black women there is a constant transition that they must go through when interacting with those who do not understand their experiences. In short, transition theory does not adequately address Black women's lived experiences.

Self-Authorship

The third and final student development theory is self-authorship. This theory has been a heavy influence for creating the intervention presented in Chapter 4. Similar to Freire's (1968) critique of traditional education (see Chapter 2), self-authorship allows for students to become critical thinkers by giving them the ability and power to create an internal capacity to define themselves as a relationship to themselves and others. Applying self-authorship to student development allows for learning to be a collective effort and not based solely within the individual. Self-authorship has directly informed the assessment strategy for the proposed intervention in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In this chapter I briefly reviewed the relevant history related to my thematic concern. Present challenges and literature were presented following the historical perspective on Black women's experience. The final section connected student development theories with the projectof this

critical action research thesis. All of the work of this chapter describes the foundation formy

intervention, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Program Design

"You don't make progress by standing on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining. You make progress by implementing ideas." - Shirley Chisholm

In this chapter, I will outline the program proposal for my intervention, *Her Melanin*. I created this intervention to address my thematic concern of how to combat imposter syndrome in Black women pursuing a higher education degree at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). I had originally planned an intervention that focused primarily on mentorship but as I worked to imagine my proposed program it grew to incorporate other components. Mentoring and mentorship remains a foundational part of my intervention. As I planned my proposed intervention, I was concerned that creating a program at a PWI might hurt more than help my concern. When I began my work, I initially wanted to create a mentorship program. Over time this idea evolved, and I decided to create a student organization because I felt it would be more impactful and give Black female students an educational experience.

Her Melanin is a student organization that focuses on Black women and their experience pursuing higher education. The first purpose of the intervention is to give Black women a space of their own. The second is to contribute to the research of Black women's experience within higher education. This intervention is grounded in my personal philosophy of education (see Chapter 2). My beliefs about education have been influenced by the works of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and bell hooks. Each of these scholars have advocated for a problem-posing education. In my proposed intervention, I wanted to problematize Black women's experiences who are attending higher education institutions.

My proposed intervention is also framed by a number of theories, some from outside

education and others the from within higher education/student affairs. In Chapter 3 I briefly reviewed both black feminist theory (Collins, 2002) and critical race theory (Delgado & Bernal, 2012), two theoretical frameworks that put race and gender at the center of analysis. Marginality & mattering (Schlossberg, 1989), transition theory (Schlossberg, 1989), and self-authorship (Magolda Baxter, 2007) were also presented as representative theories from student affairs and student development.

<div align="center">*Her Melanin* **Overview**</div>

In this section, I will give an overview of *Her Melanin* and how student affairs professionals can implement this student organization on campus. The name of my program intervention is *Her Melanin*, a student organization focused on Black women. The mission of *Her Melanin* is focused on the holistic support and development for Black women as they matriculate through higher education by creating an environment of support and personal growth for all Black women. The organization hopes to inspire, empower, and encourage Black women through opportunities like mentoring, leadership development, social development, academic support, career guidance, and community service.

***Her Melanin* Goals and Objectives**

Table 4.1 outlines *Her Melanin*'s program goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. By accomplishing these program goals, *Her Melanin* will work towards: (1) improving the visibility of Black women on college/university campuses; (2) giving Black women the tools/skills to overcome imposter syndrome; (3) giving Black women the opportunity to learn and grow from each other; and (4) contributing to the research on Black women's college experience.

Table 4. 1 Goals, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes for Proposed Intervention

Goals	Objectives	Learning Outcomes
Program Goal #1 *Her Melanin* will create a safe space for Black women to share, discuss and learn from one another.	Objective A: Recruit Black women to join *Her Melanin*.	Learning Outcome 1c: Participating in *Her Melanin* students will be able to develop their personal experience as Black women.
	Objective B: *F*acilitate the development of mentoring relationships between students, faculty, staff, and community members.	Learning Outcome 2c: Students will be able to link imposter syndrome to the Black women's lived experience.
	Objective C: Offer bi-weekly meetings and semesterly workshops and programs.	
Program Goal #2 *Her Melanin* will equip students to handle feelings of imposter syndrome	Objective A: *Her Melanin* will educate students on imposter syndrome	Learning Outcome 1a: By attending Me, You and Imposter Syndrome students will be able to identify imposter syndrome and its effects on their everyday life.
		Learning Outcome 2a: Students will be able to integrate best practices of coping with imposter syndrome into their daily lives.
	Objective B: *Her Melanin* will offer different workshops professional development opportunities	Learning Outcome 1b: By participating in Her Melanin programs students apply skills to overcome imposter syndrome.

Her Melanin will create a safe space for Black women to share, discuss, and learn from one another. I will know Program Goal #1 has been achieved when the organization is approved as an official student organization as well as when programs have been finalized and scheduled

on the activities calendar. *Her Melanin* will also equip students to handle feelings of imposter syndrome. Specifically, I will know that Program Goal #2 has been achieved when students have attended the Me, You, and Imposter Syndrome program and through the demonstrations and exhibits at the End of Year Showcase.

Her Melanin **Program Proposal**

The program proposal should be viewed as a blueprint for student affairs professionals to implement at their specific institutions. Though traditionally student organizations are created by students, this program proposal is focused on the creation of a student organization guided by the institution. Prior to implementing *Her Melanin* as a student organization, the following steps (often dictated by an institution) must be implemented to create a recognized student organization. For this program proposal, I will be modeling how to start a student organization based on a Middle State Accredited university's policy on starting a student organization (Ram's Eye View, 2020). The policy outlines ten steps needed to start a student organization: (1) Student organization research, (2) Meet with university staff, (3) Securing an advisor, (4) Fill our proper documents for the new organization, (5) Recruitment, (6) does not apply to student organizations, (7) Create and submit governing documents, (8) Attend bylaw review committee hearing, (9) Review and approval by Student government association (SGA) and finally, (10) Granted recognition by the Vice President of Student Affair (VPSA). The following sections will provide further detail for the first six steps (see Chapter 5 for more information on assessment and implementation).

Step 1: Student Organization Research

Prior to any organization starting on campus, most student life offices ask for or require data to be collected to make sure that there is a need on campus. For example, if there is a trend of

Black women not being retained until graduation, a possible reason might be because they do not feel welcomed on campus. Another way to see if *Her Melanin* should be implemented could be drawn from the results of a university climate survey. The best practice for student organization research is to check past and current student organizations to see if there is or has been an organization similar to *Her Melanin*. If there is a similar organization already in existence, I would suggest using or combining the two organizations. For organizations that are inactive, the student life office keeps records of them, which could be helpful in reactivation.

While completing student organization research, interested parties should also start identifying interested Black female students. This could happen in two ways. The first strategy to recruit students would be to shoulder tap students that would benefit from and/or contribute to *Her Melanin.* A student network will be very important in getting quantitative data on the need for *Her Melanin*. The second strategy would be to hold interest meetings during the semester before launching *Her Melanin*. In step five I unpack these strategies and the different best practices that can be used.

Step 2: Meet with University Staff

Student life offices often will require an initial interview to provide an overview of existing student organizations on campus. The meeting will help with creating a plan to complete the steps and requirements to be an organization. In this meeting, the staff member will want to know why the organization should be created which would provide an opportunity to share findings from student organization research. Any plan should also include the ways that the organization will be sustainable. By sustain, I mean how the organization will be kept active on campus for the next 5-10 years. In a later section, I describe my implementation timeline and in

Chapter 5 I will go in-depth on how to implement this organization as well as how to sustain the organization on a campus. Also, the initial planning and interest meeting can be an opportunity to start building a partnership with the student life office. This would also be a good time to inquire if the office knows of any Black women students that would be interested in *Her Melanin*.

Step 3: Secure on Campus faculty/staff advisor

As a student affairs professional pursuing creating this organization, this step should be easy to complete. To keep student leaders accountable they will need an advisor to fulfill the program goals. According to the policy, a student organization must have a faculty or staff member employed by the college or university as their advisor. In the pilot year (first year) of *Her Melanin*, the advisor's role will be very important to the success of the program. This is because the advisor will be spearheading all of the recruitment, building, and implementation of *Her Melanin* until the organization is approved or has student leaders to help. Also, the advisor will set the tone of *Her Melanin's* organizational culture which can be an educational or miseducational experience. In my research, I found that because of the lack of Black women faculty/staff, finding an advisor could be challenging because Black women are already stretched thin with being a part of social justice and racial committees/projects, as well as staying on top of their full-time job and personal life.

Step 4: Fill out all necessary paperwork to recognize a student organization

All student organizations have to submit paperwork that typically includes outlining the name of the organization, leadership positions, faculty or staff advisor, and sample by-laws. The student life staff member can help with what paperwork needs to be turned in and the due dates.

In the following section and the implementation timeline (see Chapter 5), I will provide sample answers to the paperwork that will need to be completed for this step.

Step 5: Recruit

As I mentioned throughout the previous step, recruitment efforts should be ongoing. The two strategies I suggested were to shoulder tap students and conduct interest meetings. "Shoulder tapping" is when a student affairs professional reaches out to specific students that can benefit and/or contribute to an organization. The second strategy is to hold an interest meeting. In the year-long implementation timeline, I will give the suggestion of when interest meetings should be held. An interest meeting will provide the first impression of what Black women should expect from the organization. As a form of best practice for sustaining student organizations at the beginning of both the fall and spring, colleges and universities typically have student involvement fairs. The involvement fair gives students a chance to see what student organizations are on campus. This will be a great opportunity to recruit students in the beginning of both semesters. If possible, participation in the student involvement fair should be prioritized and student emails should be collected. Social media platforms should also be used to promote *Her Melanin* during this time.

Step 6: Create and Submit Bylaws

Though this is step six, it is important to work on the bylaws simultaneously with the first five steps. The bylaws will be the governing document of *Her Melanin.* Since the bylaws are the foundation of the organization, this step should commence once the decision to start *Her Melanin* has been made. The structure of the student leadership was designed so that there is not the traditional President, Vice President, and so on. This is because I want the organization to have a collaborative feel to help create a community. The structure I have created includes having an

Event Coordinator, Treasurer, and PR Coordinator (see Table 4.2). I created this structure to not

perpetuate the hierarchical power struggle that happens between students in leadership positions

(i.e., President, Vice President, etc.) and students as members. This structure will give students

the chance to work more collaboratively with one another. Table 4.2 provides a description for

each position.

Table 4. 2 Student Organization Positions and Responsibilities

Position Title	***Description of Position Responsibilities***
Event Coordinator	● Plans programs and events for each semester ● In charge of reaching out to speakers and special guest for events ● Book locations and room on and off-campus ● Work with the treasurer for funding events or giveaways etc. ● Will work with an advisor in creating and evaluating *Her Melanin*'s programs/events ● Will help with planning and executing the end-of-year showcase, (this will be a shared task between all members of the board.) ● Will have to attend monthly 1:1 meeting with the advisor
PR Coordinator	● PR coordinator is primarily responsible for managing all marketing and on behalf of Her Melanin. ● Will oversee all social media campaigns ● Will be in charge of designing flyers and marketing tools Get ● flyers approved to hang up by the student life office or the person in charge of hanging up flyers ● Send email updates for the meetings, events, etc to students, Her Melanin email list, and community /campus partners ● Will help with planning and executing the end-of-year showcase, (this will be a shared task between all members of the board.) ● Will have to attend monthly 1:1 meeting with the advisor ● For the first year will work with the advisor to design Her Melanin's logo

	● Work closely with event coordinator on prompting events and programs
Treasurer	● Will handle Her Melanin budgeting and request funds for student government ● Will be responsible for the semester/ academic yearly planning and record-keeping ● Work closely with event coordinator on funding for events giveaways etc ● Will help with planning and executing the end-of-year showcase, (this will be a shared task between all members of the board.) ● Will have to attend monthly 1:1 meeting with the advisor
Advisor of *Her Melanin*	● The advisor shall assist the group in their execution of roles and responsibilities. The advisor shall provide feedback to the organization regarding ● its operation and functioning. The advisor shall serve as a resource. ● ● The advisor shall oversee the assessment of programs ● The advisor should provide advice upon request, and also should share knowledge, expertise, and experience with the group. ● The advisor will be a nonvoting member of the organization.

Final steps synopsis: Gaining approval by SGA or office for student organization/ budgeting

This program proposal focuses primarily on the first six steps for creating a new student organization outlined above. The final four steps (e.g., getting approval by SGA, submitting a budget, attending a bylaw review committee meeting, and granting recognition by VPSA), must be addressed on a campus-by-campus basis because each university will require specific steps and procedures. In Chapter 5, I will explain the budget and funding of *Her Melanin*. The budget can be found in Appendix A.

Professional Competencies

In 2015 ACPA/NASPA created a joint task force to create professional competencies for student affairs professionals. The task force defines professional competencies "as the broad professional knowledge, skills, and for some competencies, attitudes expected of student affairs professionals working in the U.S., regardless of their area of specialization or positional role within the field" (Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, 2020). These competencies are designed to help to inform professional development opportunities. Even though the professional competencies were developed for student affairs professionals, the competency outcomes can be incorporated into the designing of curriculum, for creating student organizations, and for student training.

For *Her Melanin* I have modeled the program goals to correspond with the ACPA/NASPA professional competencies of Leadership and Social Justice. The Leadership competency is addressed because *Her Melanin* can potentially give Black female students the tools necessary to develop in their leadership abilities. My intervention also addresses the competency for Social Justice. *Her Melanin* was created to combat the little to no research available on helping support Black female students as they matriculate through higher education.

Intervention Challenges

There are always challenges with any new initiative; *Her Melanin* is no different. Throughout the development process of building *Her Melanin,* there are a few challenges that have been identified. The first is determining who will be in charge of pairing the mentor with the mentee. If this organization is to be a mentorship program, this would need to be considered first and foremost. This could be challenging because if this is implemented at a PWI the mentors would be from all walks of life and possibly external to the university. This could be a pitfall if

there are no women of color in the university or greater community how could cross- mentorship effectively so that this does not do damage to the student's development.

A second challenge is also related to the mentoring component of the intervention. Since *Her Melanin* is being implemented as a student organization, the training of mentors must be carefully considered. One possible solution to this would include drawing on Diversity & Inclusion Offices or Centers for Women and Gender Equity already present on campus. These offices are better equipped to provide training, resources, and space to support *Her Melanin*. A final concern is related to how *Her Melanin*, as an intervention, will be assessed since it is being proposed as a student organization. One solution to the concern around assessment might be to include within the advisor's responsibilities a requirement to conduct and submit assessments of the organization's activities to administration. If there is substantive institutional, the faculty member could also be supported via a research leave that would provide additional time for the assessment and advising of the organization. Ultimately, the hope would be that this role could evolve into a full-time role.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained a potential solution to my thematic concern. I outlined *Her Melanin*'s goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. I also enumerated the steps needed to effectively create *Her Melanin* on a university campus. I connected *Her Melanin* program goals to ACPA/NASPA competencies. Finally, I discussed the challenges that can occur in practice. In the last and final chapter of this critical action research thesis, I will demonstrate my implementation plan for *Her Melanin*, a sample budget, and assessment strategies.

Chapter 5: Implementation & Evaluation

"Without imagination we can go nowhere. And imagination is not restricted to the arts. Every scientist I have met who has been a success has had to imagine."

-Rita Dove

In the previous chapter I revealed my intervention which is aimed at addressing the root of the problem of impostor syndrome for Black female students. Building on this work, I discuss below implementation strategies and plans, budgeting and funding, as well as connections to leadership, assessment, and limitations. I close with a brief summary of this critical action research thesis.

Implementation Timeline

This section will explain the implementation plan and how to apply the steps outlined in Chapter 4 to create *Her Melanin*. The implementation will happen over two academic years (e.g., Fall 2021 to Fall 2023). The implementation outline is set up so that the organizational paperwork will be approved in a spring semester, which allows for *Her Melanin* to be a recognized student organization by the fall (sample timeline in Table 5.1). For example, to begin in Fall 2021, the paperwork would need to be submitted by Spring 2021.

Table 5. 1 Implementation timeline

Fall 2021	Pre-Planning Semester
Spring 2022	Planning Semester
Summer 2022	Preparation Semester

| Fall 2022 | Kick-off Semester |
| Spring 2023 | Assessment Semester |

Fall semester (Pre-planning semester)

In the pre-planning semester, a year in advance from the "kick-off" semester, planning for the first few steps should begin. During this semester completing the student organization research should be the primary focus. This step should be planned and executed at the beginning of the fall semester. Once the research is complete, recruitment for the number of Black women students necessary to start the organization should commence. Then, a meeting with the director of the student organization about *Her Melanin* should be scheduled and paperwork obtained. This meeting will cover topics such as how student organizations are funded and what is the process for receiving money from the student government association (SGA). It is important to complete all of the paperwork by the end of the fall semester so that it can be submitted by the beginning of the spring semester. The budget and money request forms should be filled out by the middle of the spring semester.

Concurrently, the fall semester should be used to complete these tasks: (1) Find and solidify an advisor(s); (2) Start working towards creating the bylaws. Sample bylaws for *Her Melanin* can be found in Appendix B; (3) Start putting together a draft budget for the upcoming academic year, in case this money needs to be requested from the student government; (4) Start the recruitment process for leadership positions and students; and (5) If the university allows, conduct at least one interest meeting by the end of the semester or plan a few for the spring semester because recruitment will be the main priority.

Spring Semester (planning semester)

At this point *Her Melanin* is one semester away from launch. The spring will be a heavy planning and recruiting semester. In the fall semester, the student organization packet should have been completed and turned into the student life office. Interest meetings or tabling events should be scheduled. These events can be helpful with recruiting students to join in the fall. If the student leader positions are already filled, meeting with *Her Melanin* constituents can encourage collaboration of ideas for the programs and/or events for the upcoming semester (kick-off). Appendix C has a sample list of programs/events with descriptions.

During this semester the preliminary budget should be developed and reviewed by the Student Government Association treasurer. Traditionally, funding for student organizations is streamed through the SGA, which comes from student activity fees (depending on the institution it can be included in student's tuition). There are some universities that do not fully fund student organizations, which means that student organizations can request a certain amount of money to put towards one event (i.e., conference, program, materials for organization). The preliminary budget will be helpful in calculating how much fundraising is needed to offset the cost of the first year of *Her Melanin*. In Appendix A there is a sample budget which I created as a foundation for a pilot year of *Her Melanin.* Later in this chapter I will discuss how to campaign for donations from student affairs departments.

Once interest meetings and tabling events are scheduled, brainstorming with the student leadership of *Her Melanin* on the programs and events for the upcoming academic year can begin. In Appendix C there is a list of sample program names and descriptions and a sample calendar to help with planning. When heading the program planning for fall, it will be very important to allow the students to have a voice in creating and planning their programs. It is recommended that there be at least two meetings by the end of the semester to dedicate the time

for planning and assigning tasks for the summer. These meetings will prepare student leaders for the summer training.

Summer Semester (preparation semester)

As the fall semester is fast approaching, the summer semester should be used to prepare the following three tasks: (1) Having training for student leaders and advisor(s); (2) Promoting *Her Melanin* to incoming and current students; and (3) Finalizing the events or programs for the upcoming academic year.

Planning of training should be done between the end of July to a week prior to the start of the semester in August. Within this training it is important to cover topics of team building exercises/icebreakers (if necessary), going over the leadership position duties, finalizing the program planning and dates/times for meetings. The training length should be all day because there will be many things that will be needed to cover. Along with student leader/organization training, I would suggest incorporating campus partners/services that students, and especially Black female students, should/will need to utilize on campus. Another suggestion is to reach out to campus partners/resources to see if they could come to a meeting to talk with *Her Melanin*. This would give students a chance to really see the resources that can be used if needed throughout their higher education career.

Another theme that should be talked about in the training is how *Her Melanin* will promote itself on the campus. Most college and university campuses have fall and spring involvement fairs that can be amazing opportunities to continue to recruit students as well as promote upcoming programs. When talking about programming and recruitment, social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and/or Twitter should be utilized (if they are popular on campus).

For example, the social media handle should be @HerMelanin(university initials). From the different interest meetings and tabling events conducted in the fall and spring semester, there should have been a collection of student emails. Once the general meetings and *Her Melanin*'s programs are finalized, a welcome email to all of the women that showed interest should be sent out (see Appendix D). This should be a joint effort from both the advisor and PR Coordinator. While the creation of this welcome email happens, the PR coordinator/advisor should be working on the logo, flyer and social media post.

Fall Semester (kick-off semester)

The semester is finally here! All of the hard work is about to pay off. By this point, all of the steps necessary to start an organization have been met and now *Her Melanin* is an officially recognized student organization. By this semester programs, bi-weekly meetings, service events, and fundraisers should be confirmed and on the student activity calendar. Over the summer, it is important to work with the Event Coordinator, Treasurer and PR Coordinator to have weekly board meetings to keep everyone one top of their tasks. As the pilot semester, there should be intentional planning of the topics and/or themes of each meeting for the semester. The meeting times should be the same date and time each meeting, the meeting should not run more than an hour and half (if great dialogue is happening).

Spring Semester (assessment semester)

The spring semester will be very similar to the fall semester in terms of programming, service projects, and meetings. The difference would be in assessment of *Her Melanin* and the execution of the end of year showcase.

In the spring semester it is important to view the program evaluation from the fall and plan to collect that data for the spring programs. The assessment of these programs will be helpful to

see if program goals, objectives, and learning outcomes are being met. Assessment is also helpful

for future programming needs for students and the campus at large. I would suggest putting the

assessment piece in the advisor's role because the task of assessment might be too much for a

student leader to be in charge of. With the assessment of the programs it will be helpful to see

what programs can be repeated or how they might be improved. In Appendix E there are example

surveys that can be used for some of the programs/meetings.

 As I was creating *Her Melanin*, I wanted to add something that would make this organization

 unique. The idea I came up with would be an end of year showcase that builds on

John Dewey's educational experience (see Chapter 2). The goal of the showcase is to give

students that attended most or all of the programs and meetings for *Her Melanin* the opportunity

to create something that represents their journey of the past year of being a part of *Her Melanin*.

In Appendix F there is an outline of requirements and rubrics.

Budget and Funding

 Funding is an important consideration for all student affairs professionals. It is important

to understand how much money will be needed and how much money the organization already

has. In the previous section (spring semester, planning semester), I discussed where funding

comes from for student organizations. Here, I will lay out the budget and funding for my

intervention. Her *Melanin* funding will come from student activity fees allocated by SGA.

Funding can vary depending on SGA's funding policies for student organizations. The allocated

funds can vary from $300-$1,000+ per student organization, which can leave organizations in

need of alternative ways of funding. This can be done through fundraising throughout the

semester(s) or asking for help from student affairs departments. The pilot year sample budget for

Her Melanin can be found in Appendix A, but the sample budget does not have funding restrictions that may occur if put into practice.

For the first year of *Her Melanin*, seed money from the SGA and departments within student affairs such as the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Center for Women and Gender Equity, Cultural Center (and others that work with Black women students) should be sought. As *Her Melanin* is introduced to the students on campus, letters should be sent to various student affairs departments introducing *Her Melanin* and its mission. The letter is a great way to create campus partners that can contribute either financially or volunteer their time/services. A sample letter can be found in Appendix G. Another form of funding can come from fundraising throughout the semester. Fundraising can be done in traditional methods like selling baked goods in the student union/around campus, raffling off prizes, events, or through other unique methods. I would suggest planning fundraisers in advance which can allow for at least three to four fundraisers each semester or academic year. A bonus form of funding that can happen later down the line is asking for alumnae donations. A sample letter can also be found in Appendix G.

Marketing and Recruitment

Sustaining *Her Melanin* will require a thoughtful and strategic plan to market and recruit both undergraduate and graduate students. In this section, I discuss the various methods to market and recruit. These would include methods like personalized emails, advertisements throughout campus, social media, tabling events, and interest meetings. As described in Chapter 4 and the implementation timeline, marketing and recruitment should start as soon as allowed by the student life office. The recruitment should start by sending an email letter to Black women students, explaining *Her Melanin* and how they can get involved. The letter should detail the upcoming interest meeting and/or tabling events. A sample letter can be found in Appendix G. In

Appendix H there are sample flyer(s) for recruitment.

Leadership in Higher Education

Leadership means different things to different people, but it can be agreed that traditionally leadership has embraced stereotypical characteristics such as power, hegemonic masculinity, and influence. In higher education, leadership is seen as an educational learning opportunity where learning is happening for both the leader and those they are leading. Though student development theories can help students become change agents through their leadership skills, to be an effective leader it is necessary to possess characteristics of transformative leadership. These characteristics are necessary because leaders should be able to unite individuals together to obtain a common goal or purpose in hopes of making change where necessary.

Northouse (2004) describes and defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). The important part of this definition is *process* because leaders should be constantly evolving and learning. I would define effective leadership as an individual who leads a group of people to a common goal through interpersonal skills. Effective leaders have strong empathic relationships with their followers, and they thrive in rapidly changing environments. Leaders that can adapt quickly will be able to influence many people to follow them. The following section will explain what transformational leadership is and how it guided the modeling of *Her Melanin*.

Transformational Leadership

Northouse (2004) describes transformational leadership as:

> the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the need and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential. (p. 170)

In higher education leaders who adopt a transformative leadership style influence others to reach a common goal through interpersonal skills. I define transformative leadership as an individual that influences others to work together towards a common goal while creating sustainable change. Transformative leaders have a growth mindset and are visionary. To be a transformative leader takes time compared to a traditional leader.

Leadership and *Her Melanin*

In the creation of *Her Melanin,* I wanted to use a BFT (Black Feminist Theory) lens to apply to leadership. Similar to how teachers create an environment with their students, it is important for a leader to create an environment that promotes the ideologies of collective and individual growth. Using the Social Change Model of Leadership (Astin & Astin,1996), *Her Melanin* demonstrates the two of the seven Cs, common purpose and controversy with civility. *Her Melanin* established common purpose with the mission and program goals. As *Her Melanin* is being established to bring Black women together and change how society and academics see them. *Her Melanin* was also created to give space for Black women to debrief and talk about their personal experience. In the bi-weekly meetings, students will be able to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue that will allow for growth and active listening to take place.

With a transformative leadership mindset, my intervention would be more sustainable because it focuses on making the change through mentorships, workshops, retention of Black female students in higher education, and possibly changing policies so that Black women have a sense of belonging. Through using the Social Change Model of Leadership and transformative leadership skills *Her Melanin* can inspire students to become social change agents. by incorporating

<div align="center">

Assessment & Evaluation

</div>

A key component of critical action research is the continuous reflection and assessment of practices and implementation of programs to learn if program goals are being obtained (see Chapter 2). This section will determine how assessment methods would be utilized for *Her Melanin* in spring semester, assessment semester (see implementation timeline above). The methods outlined in this section include pre- and post-surveys, focus groups/investigative interviews, assessment of programs, and end of year showcase. Similar to marketing and recruitment, assessment is another important way to sustain *Her Melanin.* To help with sustainability of *Her Melanin* it is important to conduct an assessment of the overall student organization from start to finish.

A method of assessment of *Her Melanin* can be conducted through pre- and post-assessment surveys of the students. These assessments could be held as a focus group or through online/paper surveys. The pre- and post-survey should be modeled after the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) (Clance,1985). The scale was created by Clance (1985) in response to discovering imposter syndrome. The assessment measures how often a person experiences imposter characteristics. CIPS has four score ranges: 40 or less indicates few imposter syndrome characteristics; 41- 60 indicates moderate imposter syndrome experiences; 61-80 indicates frequent experiences of imposter feeling; and, 80 or more indicates intense feeling of imposter syndrome (Clance,1985, p. 20-22) Clance notes the higher on the scale are more likely to experience feelings of imposter syndrome at a higher frequency, which can be very damaging to

their life.

Along with the CIPS, the pre- and post-assessment should include evaluation of the program goals and programs. In Appendix I, there is a sample pre- and post-assessment for *Her Melanin*. Building from assessment surveys, another method of assessment that should be used is

focus groups or investigative interviews. These are methods utilized in critical action research practice. This allows for research to be collected in a very collaborative and participatory manner for both the researcher and participant.

End of program surveys can be very helpful in determining if the learning outcomes have been met. These surveys should be given to all students at either meetings or events, and it is suggested to distribute surveys through an online service like Google Forms or Qualtrics. The sharing link can then be converted to a QR code which makes it convenient for the student to complete the survey. See Appendix E for a sample program evaluation.

Built into *Her Melanin* is an opportunity for students to create critical autoethnography and display to the campus (if they want to), through the end of year showcase. Mentioned in the implementation timeline, the end of year showcase will utilize the foundation of the theory of self-authorship. Where students critically reflect on 'how imposter syndrome shows up in their life'. As well as how they are currently navigating through their personal experiences with imposter syndrome. They can also reflect on their experience with *Her Melanin*'s programs and meetings. These projects can be used as qualitative data in assessing *Her Melanin* and program planning for the following year. In Appendix F, there is a sample list of requirements for the end of year showcase.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Looking Ahead**</div>

In Chapter 4, I discussed the programmatic challenges of *Her Melanin*, and in this section will discuss the limitations surrounding implementation. In reflection there seems to be two main limitations that *Her Melanin* may face in practice: (1) assuming that university faculty/staff have time to develop *Her Melanin*, and (2) not having enough Black female students to maintain *Her Melanin.*

The first limitation I identified while developing this intervention is the assumption that the university has faculty/staff that want to develop *Her Melanin*. For the pilot year, the faculty/staff advisor has a large responsibility for implementing *Her Melanin*. My thematic concern is to address imposter syndrome for Black women pursuing a degree from a PWI. According to the NCES in 2018 there were a total number of about 374,765 faculty/staff members identified as Black and out of this total number 234,902 identified as a Black woman (NCES, 2018-2019) As mentioned in Chapter 4, for Black women working where they are in the minority can cause them to be a part of numerous projects around their intersectional identities. This can cause them to simply not have the time or resources to start this program.

The second limitation I discovered is the university not being able to retain enough Black female students to create or maintain *Her Melanin*. While Her Melanin cannot solve all of the problems given the systemic racism that exists, it could offer a beacon of hope. In the long term my intervention could offer a beacon of hope. Another way to address this limitation is to apply this intervention to other intersectional identities that may need resources related to imposter syndrome.

Conclusion

I began this thesis by exploring my positionality and developing my thematic concern in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 described my philosophy of education, expanded on critical action research, and presented a number of key terms and associated definitions. In Chapter 3 I reviewed the historical context for my thematic concern as well as connections between relevant research literature from within and beyond student affairs. Chapter 4 presented the layout for my proposed intervention, *Her Melanin*. In this final chapter, I reviewed the realities of implementing a program such as *Her Melanin*.

I was inspired to write my thesis because of my personal experience with imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome can affect many people, but it can be especially difficult for Black women or other marginalized folks. Higher education should be a welcoming place for all students to learn and develop; Black women especially need more focus by universities and society. Throughout this thesis I have tried to highlight this need for greater focus and hope that my proposed intervention will serve as a possible solution to systemic inequalities and the impact imposter syndrome can have on Black female students.

I opened my thesis with a quote from Angela Davis: "I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change…I'm changing the things I cannot accept." We can change the impact imposter syndrome has on Black women students; and *Her Melanin* is one step in the right direction.

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Appendix A: *Her Melanin* Sample Budget

Expense	Justification	Cost	Total
Personnel Expenses			
Speaker Series		2 x $3,000	$6,000.00
Operating Expenses			
Training meals	Training meals will be covered during summer training.	$25 x 5	$125
Bi-weekly Meeting	Snacks will be provided at each meeting (ex. Fruit/veggie tray, pizza, chips, water/drinks.)	$6 x 100	$600
hat's the Tea Sis Series	Various tea and snacks will be provided.	$10 x 400	$4,000
Where are they Now Series	Snacks will be provided at each program. (ex. Fruit/ veggie and water) Gifts for presenters	$ 6 x 150

$10 x 4 | $900

$40 |
Marketing and Recruitment			
Flyers	To promote *Her Melanin on campus*	$ 500	$500
Swag	Promotional items for Her Melanin and items for programs (ex. Pens, journals, DIY item)	$15 x 200	12,165
Tablecloths	The tablecloths can be used for tabling events, fundraising etc.	50 plus taxes and shipping	$300
T-shirts	Promotional items for *Her Melanin.*	$9.10 for 200	$1,820

Hootsuite Subscription	This subscription will help with $lanning posts for our social media presence.	9 per month x 12	$588
Canva Pro Subscription	Canva account to use with creating flyers and presentations	$200 annually	$200
		Grand Total	$ 29,968

Appendix B: *Her Melanin*: Sample Bylaws

Article I   Name

The name of the student organization shall be Her Melanin

Article II   Mission

Her Melanin is a student organization focused on the holistic support and development for Black women as they matriculate through higher education by creating an environment of support and personal growth for all Black women. We hope to inspire, empower and encourage Black women through opportunities like mentoring, leadership development, social development, academic support, career guidance, and community service.

Article III   Membership

The membership in the organization is open to any currently enrolled Black undergraduate and graduate students, as well as any student that identifies as a Women of color. Members will have voting rights and may serve in a student leadership position.

Former students, other members of the campus community, and community members may participate in the club, but may not hold a leadership position.

Article IV   Officers

Section 1 – Titles: The organization shall have an Event Coordinator, Treasurer, and PR Coordinator. These officers comprise *Her Melanin's Board*.

Section 2 – Qualifications: All officers must be currently enrolled students, carrying a minimum of a 2.5 cumulative GPA and a current member of *Her Melanin*.

Section 3 – Term of Office: The term of office shall be from election until the end of the academic year (for example May 2021-June 2022). A student may serve as an officer for no more than two terms.

Section 4 – Election: Election of board members shall be held annually. t

Section 5 – Duties of Officers:

Section
    5.1 - The Event Coordinator:

- The program coordinator shall plan programs and events for the fall and spring semester
- The program coordinator shall be in charge of reaching out to speakers and special guest for events
- The program coordinator shall book locations and room on and off-campus
- The program coordinator shall work with the treasurer for funding events or giveaways etc.
- The program coordinator shall work with an advisor in creating and evaluating *Her Melanin*'s programs/events
- The program coordinator shall help with planning and executing the end-of-year showcase, this task be shared between all members of the board
- The program coordinator will have to attend monthly 1:1 meeting with the advisor

Section 5.2 - The PR Coordinator:

- The PR coordinator, primarily responsible for managing all marketing and on behalf of Her Melanin.
- The PR coordinator shall oversee all social media campaigns
- The PR coordinator shall be in charge of designing flyers and marketing tools
- The PR coordinator shall get flyers approved to hang up by the student life office or the person in charge of hanging up flyers
- The PR coordinator shall send email updates for the meetings, events, etc to students, Her Melanin email list, and community /campus partners
- The PR coordinator shall help with planning and executing the end-of-year showcase, this task be a shared between all members of the board
- The PR coordinator shall have to attend monthly 1:1 meeting with the advisor
- The PR coordinator shall work with the advisor to design *Her Melanin's* logo
- The PR coordinator shall work closely with the event coordinator on prompting events and programs

Section 5.4 – Treasurer:

- The treasurer shall handle Her Melanin budgeting and request funds for student government
- The treasurer shall be responsible for the semester/ academic yearly planning and record-keeping

Section
- The treasurer shall work closely with the event coordinator on funding for events giveaways etc
- The treasurer shall help with planning and executing the end-of-year showcase,this task be a shared between all members of the board
- The treasurer shall have to attend monthly 1:1 meeting with the advisor
    6 – Resignation: An officer advisor may by submitting a letter to the Advisor.

Section 7 - Removal of Officers

Article V   Vacancies

Article VI   Advisor

Section 1 – Eligibility: The advisor to the organization shall be a full-time employee. A part-time faculty member may serve as an advisor to the organization upon approval of the faculty member's supervisor.

Section 2 – Selection: The organization is free to select any eligible employee to serve as the advisor to the organization. Upon selection, the advisor must be approved by the Director for Student Life.

Section 3 – Term of Service: The advisor shall be confirmed yearly by the general membership of the organization. Should the organization choose not to confirm the advisor, the organization must select another employee to serve as the advisor and have the advisor approved by the Director for Student Life. The advisor may resign by submitting a letter to the Director for Student Life if prior to yearly confirmation or by asking to have his/her name withdrawn from confirmation.

Section 4 – Duties of Advisor:
- The advisor shall assist the group in their execution of roles and responsibilities.
- The advisor shall provide feedback to the organization regarding its operation and functioning.
- The advisor shall serve as a resource.
- The advisor shall oversee the assessment of programs
- The advisor should provide advice upon request, and also should share knowledge, expertise, and experience with the group.
- The advisor will be a nonvoting member of the organization.

Article VII   Finances

Section

Section 1 – On-Campus Account: The organization shall be assigned a budget code for revenues and expenses by the college. The organization shall not maintain an off-campus account.

2 – Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of the organization shall be from July 1 to June 30.

Section 3 - Revenues: The organization may generate revenues through fund-raising activities approved by the Director for Student Life. Appropriate accounting procedures shall conform to college and state policy.

Section 4 - Expenditures: The organization may make expenditures with the approval of the organization's treasurer and advisor. Expenditures shall conform to college and state policy.

Article VIII   Notice of Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity

It is the policy of the university that there will be no discrimination or harassment on the grounds of sex, race, color, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, or disability in any educational programs, activities, or employment.

Article IX   Notice of Anti-Hazing

Her Melanin shall not haze any prospective member for the purpose of admission into or affiliation with the organization. Hazing is defined as any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. Members of the organization are free to leave or dissociate without fear of retribution or harassment.

Appendix C: *Her Melanin* Sample Programs

Program name	Description
Me, You & Imposter Syndrome	Students will learn about imposter syndrome and how it affects each of us. Students will learn skills and techniques to overcome these feelings.
What's the Tea Sis? Series	A program series to inform students about campus resources and current events happening within the Black women community.
My Sista's Keeper	A bonding program to bring together Black students, both undergrad and graduate, faculty and staff.
Sister Circle	Bi-weekly meetings for students where they are given time and space for critical reflection as individuals and collectively.
Where are they NOW Series	A program series to invite Black alumna to come back and talk about their experience and where they are. Black female faculty and staff should also be asked to hopefully culturate mentor/mentee relationships.
End of Year Showcase	Opportunity for students use their critical creativity to represent their journey being a part of *Her Melanin*.

Appendix D: *Her Melanin* student welcome email

subject line: Her Melanin, A space for HER by HER

Dear University community,

Melanin is a new student organization designed to give Black(African American) women space on campus to collectively learn from one another while understanding and comforting imposter syndrome. We will be holding bi-weekly meetings starting the second week of class in the fall semester. These meetings will be a space to have collective conversation and processing of personal life experiences. To learn more about Her Melanin, check out our interest meetings and tabling event this semester. Dates and times are below

Interest Meetings

Date & Time

Tabling Event
Date & Time

We hope to see you there!

Her Melanin Crew

[Interest flyer or logo here]

Appendix E: Sample survey

Name: _____   Date: _____   Student ID#: _____

Name of Program Attended: _____

Explain one thing that you learned from the program:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How would you rate this program:

Would you recommend these programs to a friend?

YES   NO   MAYBE

If selected No or Maybe please give us a brief reason why.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F: End of Year Showcase requirements

<u>Requirements</u>

- Must currently enrolled student that has attended You, Me and Imposter Syndrome as well as at least one *Her Melanin* bi-weekly meetings.
- The Project has to be a critical reflection on 'how imposter syndrome shows up in your life' and how you have overcome or are still moving through this experience.
- Needs to attend one of the end of year showcase info meetings and dress rehearsals.
- Project can be but not limited to: videos, graphic designs, sculptors , art pieces , pottery, speeches, interpretive dance, presentation, service
- Approval from advisor(s) of *Her Melanin* is needed to display or perform your projects

Appendix G: *Her Melanin* Campus partner email

Dear or Hello **[departments' name or point person]**,

Introduce yourself **[advisor]**.

Introduce *Her Melanin*, the mission of *Her Melanin* student organization focused on the holistic support and development for Black women as they matriculate through higher education by creating an environment of support and personal growth for all Black women. We hope to inspire, empower and encourage Black women through opportunities like mentoring, leadership development, social development, academic support, career guidance, and community service. I am reaching out hoping to set up a meeting or talk with someone about this student organization and how we can partner with your department or organization

[suggest a time to meet and chat]

Thank you for your time and looking forward to working together.
Appendix H: *Her Melanin* recruitment flyer

Appendix I: *Her Melanin* **pre/post assessment**

Name: _____ Student ID# or email address: _____

Define Imposter syndrome in your own word:

_____

_____

_____

Have you experienced imposter syndrome before? Yes   No   Unsure

[Interest question from Clance's (YEAR) CIPs,]