The impostor phenomenon and high-achieving men and women issues of sex and self-perceived atypicality.

Suzanne R. Jamail
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THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON AND HIGH-ACHIEVING
MEN AND WOMEN: ISSUES OF SEX AND SELF-
PERCEIVED ATYPICALITY

by

Suzanne R. Jamail

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
Through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Education at the
University of Windsor

1986
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Abstract

The effects of respondents' sex on self-perceived attitudes of intellectual fraudulence were examined. Several groups of students comprising 143 subjects, completed a modified version of the Harvey Impostor Phenomenon Scale, consisting of a series of work and academic related questions. Although it was found to be nonsignificant, discriminant function analysis indicated that four items were the most useful of all test items in predicting differences between male and female respondents. Analysis of variance revealed no significant sex differences on any of the dependent variables. Overall, respondents reported very similar low ratings of fraudulent experiences. Though unable to show statistical significance, women tended to display a greater frequency of fraudulent behaviour. More sensitive tests to assess sex differences with regards to self-perceived attitudes of intellectual fraudulence were suggested.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It's a feeling of intense anxiety. Each time I receive a new assignment, I panic, thinking that this time, I won't be able to "pull it off." I've been lucky so far, but if my luck runs out, I'll be exposed as a fraud and lose everything.

- Jackie, Corporate Executive

When we hear words like impostor, phony and fraud, images of people who set out to deceive us come to mind. But, consider the individual who despite inarguable job success, feels that she doesn't really deserve her success and furthermore, feels that she has been fooling others into thinking that she is much more intelligent and competent than she actually is. She is anxious as she anticipates what will happen when others "find her out." She is convinced that anything short of "perfection" will lead to public humiliation and exposure as a fraud.

On another level, she is aware of the fact that she has excelled in school, earned the correct degrees, received awards and praise from her colleagues, and advanced rapidly within her career. Despite the evidence, none of her success seems earned.

Why would such a person consider herself a fraud? She is a victim of the Impostor Phenomenon. Although the Impostor Phenomenon is not a new problem, it wasn't until 1974 that the syndrome even had a name. Dr. Pauline Clance and Dr. Suzanne
Imes, psychologists from Georgia State University, coined the term "Impostor Phenomenon." They had been observing the phenomenon for several years, studying a number of successful college students and professional women who had one striking thing in common: a conviction that their academic and career success was unrelated to their own ability. At any moment, each feared, she would be exposed as an impostor (Clance & Imes, 1978).

According to Harvey and Katz (1985), the Impostor Phenomenon is a psychological syndrome. The syndrome or pattern, is based on intense, secret feelings of fraudulence in the face of valid, tangible accomplishments. An IP victim believes that she doesn't deserve her success because she attributes it to some mysterious fluke, luck or great effort or anything but ability.

The sense of being a fraud, is only part of the Impostor Phenomenon. Persons with IP feelings experience considerable self-doubt and worry excessively. Although IP victims are often people who are driven to succeed, they're frightened that they cannot repeat their accomplishments. They remember all their difficult times more than their successes or the tasks they previously completed with ease. Victims of the Impostor Phenomenon are caught up in a cycle of thoughts, emotions, and actions that can virtually control their lives (Harvey & Katz, 1985). According to the authors, to a victim of the Impostor Phenomenon, other people make the "mistake" of thinking she is more gifted and intelligent than she actually is. She remains secretly convinced that she is mediocre, unqualified, and
According to C'Ance (1985), seventy percent of successful people have felt themselves to be an impostor for at least one period of their lives. IP victims are people who lead perfectly normal lives. They marry, have children, and often excel in their work. They are regular people like you and me, and the Jones' down the street (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

The Impostor Phenomenon is not selective about choosing its victims. Men and women, young and old, and members of all races suffer from fraudulent feelings. Further, the Impostor Phenomenon affects people in all occupations. It is true however, that if you feel like an impostor, you must have accomplished some type of success, something about which to feel fraudulent. It must be noted however, that the idea of success does not only refer to the top-of-the-ladder, rich-and-famous kind of success. The Impostor Phenomenon is related to how you feel about a particular role you are playing (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

While men and women are plagued by impostor feelings, some researchers believe that the problem may be a bigger career headache for women because of certain societal pressures. According to Matthews (1984) women come into the workplace feeling they have to "prove" themselves more than men do. Further, many career women are still afraid to own up to their abilities for fear of seeming arrogant or unfeminine.

In 1985, I began studying the Impostor Phenomenon. As an undergraduate, working towards my Honours B.A. in psychology, I
had always done well and received mostly A's throughout my educational career. Yet despite the accomplishments achieved, I experienced some doubt about my intelligence and my ability to be a successful career woman. I watched many of my friends experience similar feelings. We felt unique however, and did not realize that our experience - the Impostor Phenomenon - was very prevalent among other success-seekers.

Based on my own experiences which were consistent with previous ideas on the Impostor Phenomenon, I assumed this syndrome would be more of a problem for women than for men. Having realized it was necessary to measure this assumption objectively, I devised a slightly modified version of the empirically tested Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale. The test instrument was given to 143 subjects enrolled in the Principals' Course offered at the Faculty of Education (University of Windsor). It was hypothesized that female respondents would reveal more intense experiences of intellectual fraudulence as evidenced by their significantly higher mean I-P Scale score.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on the topic as it relates to differential attribution of success and failure by men and women. Chapter 3 includes a description of subjects, materials, and procedures used to carry out the study. Chapter 4 provides statistical interpretation of the data. Chapter 5 discusses the statistical findings and offers suggestions for future studies.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although the Impostor Phenomenon is not a new problem, scientific examination of the issue at present, remains in the exploratory stages. Consequently, there exists a paucity of experimental studies resulting in a dependence upon the leading contributors of IP research as major sources of information for the present study.

The present study aims to add to the findings of impostor research by shedding more light on an area of secret conflict.

The Impostor Phenomenon is a psychological syndrome based on intense, secret feelings of fraudulence in the face of success and achievement. Success is never truly fulfilling to the IP victim because he is always too busy trying to make sure no one "finds him out". Victims of the Impostor Phenomenon are often individuals who are driven to achieve but live in fear that each new undertaking will reveal them as fakes (Clance, 1985; Harvey & Katz, 1985).

As reported by Harvey and Katz (1985), there are three basic signs of the Impostor Phenomenon that are present in anyone who is an IP victim. They include the following:

1) The sense of having fooled others into overestimating your ability.
2) The attribution of your success to some factor other than intelligence or ability.
3) The fear of being exposed as a fake.
It is believed that the most dominant characteristic of IP victims is their inability to hear and believe the compliments of others, and to accept the objective evidence regarding their achievements or intellectual ability (Clance, 1985). Others view their accomplishments as evidence that they are qualified and capable, but, IP victims see things differently. The person with "impostor" feelings lives with the feeling that he is not what he appears to be. A discrepancy develops between the way he views himself and the way in which others view him (Harvey & Katz, 1985). This discrepancy is the first sign of the Impostor Phenomenon.

A victim of the Impostor Phenomenon is painfully aware of the difference between his public and private image and as a result, he feels like a phony who has been fooling everybody. He suffers from an inability to "internalize" or take credit for his success. Even as his successes accumulate, he cannot accept them as evidence of his own talents and abilities. So how does the IP victim explain a new promotion, a salary increase, or praise from his colleagues? According to Harvey and Katz (1985) the impostor does have an explanation for his success and this is where sign number two makes its appearance.

The impostor believes he is an intellectual fraud who has attained success because he knew someone in power, was at the right place at the right time, or worked harder than anybody else in his office. He may believe that his success is due to his good looks, charm, social skills or simply a matter of good luck. Victims of the Impostor Phenomenon attribute their success
to every reason except the real one - ability (Clance, 1985; Harvey & Katz, 1985). Since the impostor believes his success is the result of something "external" to himself, he is certain that other people are wrong about him. He is unable to experience any lasting enjoyment of his success because he is preoccupied with the thought of being exposed as a fake (Harvey & Katz, 1985). We have arrived at sign number three: the fear of exposure.

The person with IP feelings experiences terror when he anticipates that "the big one" is coming. The "big one", as described by Harvey and Katz (1985), is any event that has the potential to expose one as a fake. As stated by a self-declared female impostor, "I was convinced that I would be exposed as a phony when I took my comprehensive doctoral examination. I thought the final test had come" (Clance & Imes, 1978).

Since the IP victim panics at the thought of being exposed as a fake, he often suffers from another fear. This is the fear of failing. To the impostor, any failure will undoubtedly lead to the humiliation and nationwide exposure as a fraud. Impostors seek perfection in almost every aspect of their performance. They expect to perform every task flawlessly and with ease. Anything short of perfection or genius will activate the impostor's feelings of self-doubt. So it must be understood that any event considered significant to the victim has the potential to destroy everything for which he has ever worked (Harvey & Katz, 1985; Clance, 1985).

Despite the fact that the Impostor Phenomenon is a very real and debilitating problem for many people, it often goes
unrecognized and untreated. When someone believes he is a fake, he chooses not to let this "fact" become public knowledge (Harvey & Katz, 1985). As several psychologists have observed, "impostor" feelings are rarely stated as the presenting problem by those entering psychotherapy. Since these feelings comprise a well-guarded secret, clients may choose to talk about a variety of other problems (Clance & Imes, 1978). According to Harvey and Katz (1985), some of the most common complaints are insomnia, procrastination, pounding of the heart, and tension in the neck, shoulders, or jaw. Further, IP symptoms may include more extreme conditions such as alcohol or drug abuse, eating disorders, and obsessive-compulsive thoughts. It is true of course, that these symptoms may also be experienced by the non-impostor. However, as the authors suggested, over time feelings of fraudulence and the dread of exposure can lead to such signs of stress. An impostor may not understand exactly what the problem is, but he is aware of the fact that something is definitely wrong.

If someone is suffering from feelings of fraudulence and a fear of being exposed, then why may he not understand what the problem is as was suggested by Harvey and Katz (1985)? The authors reported that the IP victim does not see his belief that he is a fake as something that can be treated or changed. He doesn't think: "I feel like a fake." Instead, he thinks: "I am a fake". In their minds, IP victims believe that they truly are impostors who have been fooling everyone into thinking they are something they are not.

People often make the mistake in believing that the Impostor
Phenomenon and insecurity or low self-esteem are one and the same. As noted by Harvey and Katz (1985), there is a relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and insecurity, but, insecurity is a very broad concept, encompassing a wide spectrum of feelings and behaviours. It is true, that insecurity involves feelings of self-doubt and a lack of self-confidence that are in fact, experienced by the IP victim. However, as the authors have emphasized, insecurity is not a specific syndrome with specific, identifiable symptoms. In contrast, the Impostor Phenomenon, is a very distinct type of insecurity. The IP is a syndrome that can be clearly defined and identified. The Impostor Phenomenon is not simply a matter of "being insecure". The IP is comprised of a series of very specific feelings with specific ways of thinking and behaving, and unlike general insecurity, it is associated with a strong desire to achieve at some level.

Harvey and Katz (1985) made the point that a person may feel insecure without feeling like an impostor. For example, one type of insecurity is the fear of losing everything, only to be left alone, lonely and poor. This fear may be rooted in a past trauma, such as sudden poverty, or perhaps, abandonment by a parent. Many IP victims share this fear, but, in this instance, the basis of this fear rests in the idea that they will be exposed as fakes.

Similarly, there exists another difference between general insecurity and the Impostor Phenomenon in terms of how people deal with each problem. The insecure person may or may not show it in his behaviour. He may choose to discuss his insecurity
with a friend. It is unlikely that the insecure person will experience shame and fear of being exposed as an impostor (Harvey & Katz, 1985). On the other hand, the authors make the point that the impostor will undoubtedly choose to keep his fraudulent feelings to himself. The negative connotations are far greater for the impostor than they are for the insecure person. In addition, it is typical for the IP victim to see his condition as unchangeable or untreatable.

Traditionally, self-esteem has been considered to be an all-or-nothing situation. In other words, a person either has esteem for himself in all areas or he does not have it in any areas at all. Generally, self-esteem refers to a feeling of overall, positive self-regard. For the IP victim, this is not the case. The person with IP feelings often has a very positive regard for many of the qualities he possesses while at the same time, feeling like an impostor in one specific area (Harvey & Katz, 1985). It must be understood however, that he feels perfectly fine about himself in areas outside this one. It is his belief that he is lacking only some quality significantly related to his role. Such qualities may include intelligence, management skills, creativity, or any skill that is relevant to his line of work. Further, as noted by the authors, the person with low self-esteem is generally not driven to achieve. On the other hand, the IP sufferer commonly feels a very intense need to achieve. It can be said then, that the person with very low self-esteem is missing something essential to the definition of an IP victim. Those with low self-esteem often remain at the
bottom of the totem pole while impostors, usually have self-esteem high enough to allow them to reach the top.

As well, it should be mentioned, that the one quality the impostor believes he is missing also happens to be the one he believes is the true sign of ability. He attributes his success to a personal asset he knows he possesses such as a charming personality, or good looks. Although the impostor takes his ability for granted, he places too much emphasis on his good looks or personality when trying to explain his accomplishments (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

According to Harvey and Katz (1985), there are several ways the Impostor Phenomenon can manifest itself, each in its own way reinforcing the victim's feelings of fraudulence. Let us consider the 3 major types of impostors the Workaholic, the Magical Thinker and the Charmer.

THE WORKAHOLIC

It is obvious that not all workaholics are victims of the Impostor Phenomenon. However, workaholism is one of the behaviour patterns of the IP syndrome. The IP Workaholic attributes his achievement to his compulsive efforts. IP Workaholics are so terrified of failing, that they approach every project or task as though it were crucial. Each performance event holds the potential of being "the big one" - exposing them as fakes to the world. Workaholic IP victims are generally very successful in attaining the goals they set for themselves because they are intelligent and competent individuals. In the mind of the IP Workaholic, every task is given equal weight and
consequently, he never "slacks off" to any extent. As a result of never experimenting with his level of effort, he is unable to learn whether or not his own innate ability would carry him through, and so, he believes that without engaging in Herculean efforts, he would be exposed as a fraud.

THE MAGICAL THINKER

The IP Magical Thinker engages in constant, ritualistic worrying about his performance characterized by repeated visions of failure. Since they are often intelligent and competent individuals, these IP victims typically succeed in the end. However, they always pair worrying with success and therefore, see it as an essential ingredient. Thus, to the IP Magical Thinker, thoughts about failure become superstitiously linked with efforts toward achievement. Further, these IP victims always maintain a pessimistic attitude about future success. Optimistic thoughts about success are forbidden because the Magical Thinker believes these thoughts will cause him to fail. In other words, emotionally, the Magical Thinker believes that if he were to anticipate doing well, fate would punish him by making him fail. Intellectually however, the Magical Thinker knows that worrying is not responsible for his achievements.

THE CHARMER

The IP Charmer uses the power of his personality assets the way the IP Workaholic uses hard labor - to distract others from what he believes are his pitiful shortcomings. Typically, the IP Charmer is a high achieving, attractive, witty, socially adept, and extremely likeable individual. People enjoy spending time in
his company.

In high-school, these individuals were well-liked and very popular among their peers. It is true, that not everyone who possesses a charming personality believes himself to be a fraud. The IP Charmer however, attributes his success to his good looks or social skills, rather than to his innate ability. As reported by Harvey and Katz (1985), Charmers believe that their likeability and personal attractiveness create a "halo" effect that clouds the judgement of others, including experts.

Although an IP Charmer may be male or female, it is pointed out that there are some aspects to this pattern that are of particular concern for women. It is quite obvious, that our culture places a very high value on physical attractiveness — this being especially true for women. As a result, most women are driven to attain the "ideal" of beauty. To make matters even worse, many women have grown up with the notion that they must not be too aggressive for they will appear to be unfeminine and hence undesirable by men. Instead, women have been socialized directly or indirectly, to use their social skills to get what they want (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

This is a double-edged sword for women. As explained by the authors, women who attempt to meet these standards of beauty and charm, may see themselves as not revealing "the true me" and therefore, feel at odds with behavior they have been taught is "correct" and desirable for women. When a woman attributes her achievements to her good looks or charming personality, she ignores the real cause of her success — ability. If however, she
chooses to downplay her appearance and social charm, she deprives herself of her natural assets.

Why do so many intelligent and talented individuals, despite objective evidence, continue to see themselves as impostors who have fooled everyone into thinking they are far more intelligent and competent than they actually are? Perhaps a discussion of the origins and dynamics of the phenomenon is in order.

According to Clance and Imes (1978) impostors typically fall into one of two groups. For the first group children, early in life, are often assigned a particular role to play within the family. The impostor was usually labeled the "sensitive" or "socially adept" one, while a sibling was designated the "intelligent" member of the family. A child's label distinguishes him from the other members of his family and it can become an important part of his identity.

According to Harvey and Katz (1985) a label implies a whole world of meaning about what a child can and cannot accomplish, and what role he is expected to play throughout his life. The implication from the family as indicated by Clance and Imes (1978), was that the "sensitive" or socially adept child could never prove that he was as bright as his "intelligent" sibling, regardless of what he accomplished intellectually. One part of the child believed the family myth was true; another part of him wanted to prove them wrong. In school, the child was given the opportunity to prove himself intellectually. He was successful in obtaining outstanding grades and acclaim from his teachers. He felt good about his performance and hoped his family would
acknowledge that he was more than just sensitive or charming.
Unfortunately, the family continued to focus on his label, overlooking his intellectual accomplishments, while attributing greater intelligence to the "bright" sibling whose academic performance was often poorer by comparison. As a result, the child continued to be driven to prove himself intellectually, but at the same time, believed that his family was right (Clance & Imes, 1978). As Harvey and Katz (1985) have pointed out, when a child feels he must adopt only one role, he finds it difficult to accept the evidence that he has succeeded in other roles. It is not easy for him to see himself as multidimensional, capable of performing well in more than one role. This situation feels wrong to the child, causing him to experience conflict and doubt. Thus, the Impostor Phenomenon emerges.

For the second group of impostors, a different family dynamic was present. The message conveyed to the child was that he was perfect in every way possible. In the family members' eyes, there was nothing that the child could not do if he set his mind to it. Problems arose however, when the child experienced difficulty in achieving certain tasks. Although the child felt obligated to live up to his family's expectations, he knew that he could not possibly be "perfect" forever. Since he was indiscriminately praised for everything he did, he began to distrust his parents' perceptions of himself, and more importantly, he began to doubt himself (Clance & Imes, 1978). Furthermore, the authors noted that when the child went to school, his doubts about his abilities intensified because he
found it impossible to produce outstanding work if he did not study and work hard. Having internalized his parents' definition of intelligence as "perfection with ease", and realizing that he could not meet this standard, he reasoned that he must be stupid. Since he was not a genius, he must have been an intellectual impostor; an IP victim.

By now, we are well aware of the fact that impostors have a dreaded fear of failure. Paradoxically however, many IP victims are unconsciously fearful of success as well. As Harvey and Katz (1985) have suggested, every situation that holds the potential for success, also holds the potential for failure. Furthermore, the authors noted that in the mind of an impostor, the more successful he becomes, the more he fears failure of an even larger magnitude.

Impostors offer many explanations as to why they fear success. Some IP victims report that they are afraid that they will become the object of resentment and envy. Other victims worry that their successful performances will lead to more responsibility and hence, more pressure. Still there are impostors who fear the consequences of a psychological separation from their families if they become more successful than their parents or siblings. As the authors have emphasized, the person who is fearful of success, must somehow be protected against this fear. He may decide that the best method of protection is simply not to succeed. Another defense available to him, is to make the effort to succeed, but somehow sabotage himself. Finally, he may choose to attain success in reality but find some way to deny it
psychologically. He can protect himself psychologically by believing himself to be an impostor.

Thus far, our focus has been on understanding the more personal and experiential effects of impostor feelings. Let us now look at the experimental findings of attribution theorists, who in recent years, have begun to study differential attribution of success and failure by men and women.

There is considerable evidence that clearly document lower expectancies for female than male performance on tasks involving intellectual mastery (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Frieze, 1975). Expectancies about one's own performance are also low; women generally expect to fail (Stein & Bailey, 1973).

Deaux (1976) found that there are also sex differences in causal attributions for success and failure. Men are more likely than women to attribute their success to enduring, stable, internal factors such as ability, while attributing failure, to external factors such as bad luck or an extremely difficult task. Women, on the other hand, tend to attribute success to temporary, unstable, external causes, such as effort and luck. When it comes to failure, women are more willing than men to accept personal responsibility, claiming that a lack of ability is the cause of their failure.

According to Deaux and Emswiller (1974) under identical circumstances and when they are engaged in identical behaviours, the performance of males and females is attributed to different sources. For example, Feldman - Summers and Kiesler (1974) asked male and female college students to attribute causes for the
success of Dr. Mark or Dr. Marcia Greer, who had successfully completed medical school and had set up a surgical practice. Male subjects in particular attributed more ability to the male physician. They suggested that the female physician had been successful because she had had an easier task and because she had tried harder. The women in the study agreed that the female physician had tried harder than that of a comparable male.

As Harvey and Katz (1985) noted, the attribution process is undoubtedly more harmful to women than it is to men. For instance, when a woman fails at a task, she blames herself for her lack of ability. When she succeeds however, she is unable to take credit for it, attributing her "good fortune" to an external source such as luck.

According to Peters (1974) when a woman enters a profession such as medicine, law, or higher education, she collides with long-held social stereotypes. It is difficult for her to tolerate these contradictions because they interfere with her sense of self-identity. Men, however, experience neither contradictions nor identity problems since professions are typically thought of as male.

Clance and Imes (1978) cited Horner's (1972) research on women's fear of success in relation to their studies of women with fraudulent feelings. As indicated by the author, many women have a motive to avoid success out of fear that they will be rejected or considered less feminine if they do in fact succeed. Horner (1968) claimed that the fear of success in women is a result of sex-role training which places societal restrictions on
their achievement. Early in life, women come to acknowledge these restrictions and the consequences that will accrue if violated. The author suggested, that women perhaps, cannot internalize their success unless both their affiliative and achievement needs are met. Further, it was speculated, that women often find themselves in the position of having to choose between love or friendship and success. The feminine role traditionally precludes competitive success. Bardwick (1971) emphasized the incompatibility between "femininity" and the personality characteristics required to succeed in the workplace. The author made the point that women are socialized to be gentle, warm, nurturant, nonaggressive, and noncompetitive; yet successful working people need to be aggressive, dominant, analytical, competitive, and most importantly, "masculine". Females desiring success in traditionally masculine roles, risk social rejection, loss of femininity, and occupational discrimination (Bernard, 1976; Rohrbaugh, 1979). Maccoby (1963) asserted that the girl who maintains qualities of independence and achievement-oriented behaviour, defies gender-appropriate behaviour and must "pay a price in anxiety". The outcome of this situation may indeed be fear of success as suggested by Horner (1968).

According to Sutherland and Veroff (1985), similar reasoning can be applied to the situation of males. Traditional sex-role training for men focuses on the display of excellent performance in the competitive arena. Quite obviously over-concern with making or keeping friends would interfere with competition.
Furthermore, the authors noted that men, because they are not traditionally taught the value of social interaction to the same degree as women, may have to disengage themselves from the social concerns of an achievement situation in order to succeed.

Horner (1968) asked male and female college students from the University of Michigan, to write a story beginning with the following one: "After first term finals, Anne (John) finds herself (himself) at the top of her (his) medical school class. The rationale for this story-telling approach was that students would hopefully, identify with the fictitious characters, projecting their own feelings of success on to the stimulus figures. Horner's study found that 62 percent of the female respondents and 10 percent of the male respondents wrote stories concerning the negative consequences of Anne's or John's success. As indicated by Harvey and Katz (1985), Horner's (1968) research was later replicated but this time, both "Anne and John" stories were given to male and female respondents. The results of the study indicated that the majority of both sexes suggested that "Anne" would have to pay dearly for her success, while "John" would suffer far fewer penalties. As indicated by their responses, the students expected that "Anne" would be punished in some way because she had violated the female sex-role stereotype.

Tresemmer (1976, 1977) has reviewed the research on fear of success that has accumulated since Horner's (1968) study. Of major concern, has been whether fear of success imagery is a reflection of achievement motivation or merely the predictably stereotyped response to a woman's success. A number of studies
have tested whether fear of success is a function of the gender of the cue character. In general, more fear of success imagery is written by females to the "Anne" cue than to the "John" cue (Condry & Dyer, 1976; Monahan, Kuhn, & Shaver, 1974; Tresemer, 1976, 1977). This is not true for males. According to Sutherland and Veroff (1985) if fear of success is simply a matter of responding to a stereotype, both men and women should write more fear of success stories to the "Anne" cue. Thus, the authors claimed that the fear of success is not completely determined by stereotypical responses, but the gender of the stimulus figure does have some effect on females. One explanation of this as noted by the authors, may be the greater identification with a same-sexed stimulus figure for females, in conjunction with their greater willingness to express negative affect.

According to Clance and Imes (1978) if a high-achieving woman believes herself to be an intellectual phony or impostor, she allows herself to live out her achievement orientation while avoiding the negative consequences of her sex-role violation.

In examining the Impostor Phenomenon in relation to differential attribution of success and failure by men and women, the present study attempted to determine the effects of respondents' sex on a self-administered measure of the IP by respondents aspiring to be educational administrators. It was hypothesized that female respondents would reveal more intense experiences of intellectual fraudulence as evident by their significantly higher mean I-P Scale score.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

Subjects

A total of 143 subjects, comprised of 12 groups, participated in the study. Seventy-seven males and sixty-six females enrolled in the Principals' Course offered at the Faculty of Education (University of Windsor), comprised the groups. All subjects were employed in various facets of the teaching profession, and all were experimentally naive.

Materials

The test instrument contained two sections: demographic data, and a modified version of the Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale. All test items required a response on a 7-point Likert scale which ranged from "Not at all true" to Very true." A covering page was included with each questionnaire to ensure confidentiality and to state instructions.

Demographic data requested included the subjects' sex, age, occupation, and occupational aspirations. Although data was collected on all demographic variables, the researcher was concerned primarily with the respondents' sex and therefore, only included the other variables to maintain experimental naivety. The Harvey (IP) Scale is comprised of 14 test items. Its author suggests that the scale is designed to identify and measure the strength of the Impostor Phenomenon in an individual. Further, as reported by Harvey & Katz (1985), "The Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale was developed as a substantially reliable
and valid, self-administered, time-efficient method for measuring the Impostor Phenomenon" (p. 245). Since the scale used in the present study was a slightly modified version of the original Harvey (IP) Scale, it was reasoned that measures of reliability and validity would be similar for the two test instruments.

As such, the modified version of the scale was included to identify and compare any similarities and/or differences in IP scores made by male and female respondents.

Insert Table 1 about here

Procedure

Students enrolled in the Principals' Course were asked to participate in the study and completed the questionnaire in class. All subjects completed the questionnaire on an individual basis.

None of the subjects were informed of the purpose of the study prior to their involvement in the study. All subjects were requested to complete the questionnaire in a short time, indicating first impressions to the given questions. Information concerning the study was given to subjects following completion of the questionnaire. Distribution of the test instrument occurred randomly.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The reliability of the test instrument using the Guttman Split-Half technique indicated a coefficient of .57. Several different statistical analyses were applied to the data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data for each test item were analyzed initially in terms of group means, standard deviations, and correlations. The results of correlational analysis indicated that test items 2, 9, and 10 were useful in predicting sex differences at the .05 level of significance. Further, the results of such analysis indicated that test item #10 was the best predictor of sex differences followed by items #9 and #2. Overall, the findings indicated that the sexes reported very similar scores on all dependent variables.

Insert Table 2 about here

The data were then analyzed using a univariate (sex of subject) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Again, it was evident that males and females had reported very similar responses as there were no significant sex differences at the .05 level of significance. Discriminant function analysis was then applied to the data using Wilks' stepwise procedure. Although it was found to be nonsignificant, discriminant analysis produced one function that
was dominated by four variables. In their order of importance they included test item: #10 (I believe my accomplishments are adequate for this stage in my life), #9 (My charming personality tends to make a strong impression on people in authority), #12 (I have often excelled on a task even though I was afraid I would not succeed before undertaking the project), and #2 (I know my present level of achievement results from true ability). Again, although the function was not significantly useful in discriminating between the sexes, it indicated however, that items 10, 9, 12, and 2 were the most useful of all test items in predicting differences between male and female respondents. Further, the results of the analysis provided some interesting trends. For example, it was found that males tended to score higher on items 10 and 2 while females tended to score higher than their male counterparts on items 9 and 12.

A series of one-way ANOVAs were then applied to the data to determine if the trends produced by discriminant analysis were in fact significant. The findings indicated no significant sex differences on any of the dependent variables.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that female respondents would reveal more intense experiences of intellectual fraudulence as compared to their male counterparts, was not confirmed in the present study. Like the findings of Harvey, Kidder, and Sutherland (1981), no statistically significant differences were found to exist between the percentages of men and women who reported impostor feelings.

Similarly, the results of the present study indicated that one's gender alone was ineffective in predicting impostor victims among male and female respondents. According to Harvey and Katz (1985) those who perceive their careers as atypical for a person of their sex, reveal significantly higher degrees of impostor feelings than those who do not - regardless of sex. In other words, the authors noted that impostor feelings are stronger in women who believe they are employed in "male" professions and in men who perceive themselves to be in "female" professions. As Dobson (1986) pointed out, men and women fear the penalties that might result for violating their sex-role stereotype. As a result of this, the author suggested that men and women often choose to avoid engaging in atypical careers altogether.

Peters (1974) maintained that professions are typically thought of as male, particularly those that involve exercising authority and power over others. In general, it has been men in our society who have been encouraged to exercise power, while
women have been socialized to support it. This is not to say that women haven't made great strides in the social, political and economic power arenas of our culture. However, as reminded by Harvey and Katz (1985), old attitudes die hard, leaving many women bound to a rigid formula of "femininity."

Similarly, a man who participates in a traditionally "female" role, may choose to deny his innate capabilities for fear of seeming effeminate or unmasculine. It should be understood however, that a man is most likely to deny or disclaim his natural talents when he is successful in that "female" role. Although sex-role stereotypes are gradually loosening, some people still maintain the stereotype that says there is something suspect about a man who chooses to do a "woman's job" (Harvey & Katz, 1985; Bardwick, 1971).

For the individual who fears success, the Impostor Phenomenon can psychologically protect him from the penalties that might result from having violated his sex-role stereotype, by engaging in a sex-inconsistent role. He worries that he will experience social rejection when significant others are made aware of his "feminine" ways. By believing himself to be an impostor he disconnects himself from his success which psychologically shields him from these possible penalties. If someone believes he is an impostor, he has found a way of convincing himself that he isn't really good at his socially unacceptable role (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

The results of the present study indicated that the sexes reported very similar experiences of fraudulence, as there was no
statistically significant difference in the number of men and women who had reported impostor feelings. With respect to Harvey and Katz' (1985) explanation of the relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and perceived atypicality of one's career, the results of the present study appear to have indicated, that feelings of self-perceived atypicality did not occur among respondents. Perhaps, significant sex differences were not found because female respondents did not perceive themselves as "not belonging" in their teaching positions.

As Peters (1974) pointed out, the thrust of the academic woman's role has been as a teacher, and at this level, women have made their most important contribution. In other words, teaching is not an atypical profession for women. Consistent with these ideas, it is possible that sex differences would have occurred had the respondents been employed in their aspired occupation of educational administration. Traditionally, educational administration has been associated with men. It is believed that females functioning in this role, would perceive themselves as engaging in a sex-role incongruent career, thus increasing their reported incidence of impostor feelings.

The modified Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale was included in the present study to determine its predictive power concerning attitudes of self-perceived fraudulence. A prior study by Topping (1983) using the original Harvey IP Scale, concluded that the scale items reliably predicted impostor feelings among a sample of 285 University faculty members.

Like the findings of Penland and McCammon (1984) using the
original Harvey (IP) Scale, the results of the present study indicated no significant sex differences between respondents in their experiences of fraudulence. Further, the results of the present study indicated that the vast majority of respondents could be considered "non-impostor" in their attitudes as was evident by their very low IP scores. Topping (1983) however, found a range of scores on the Harvey (IP) Scale where men actually had a significantly higher mean I-P Scale score than women. The lack of such differential scores on the slightly modified Harvey (IP) Scale used in the present study may indicate that the original scale's validity is now restricted.

In trying to understand the trends that were found in the present study, a number of possible explanations have been suggested. For example, it was determined that males tended to score higher than females in believing that their accomplishments were adequate for for their present state in life.

According to Mayer (1978) women are allowed to admit their dissatisfactions without censure. Our society not only encourages women to express their feelings openly, but also supports them in doing so. By contrast, since male superiority requires forfeiting the right to be merely human - human enough to admit weakness, men are sternly prohibited from confiding their troubles and confessing their dissatisfactions.

According to Welch (1984) women make up 52 percent of the Canadian population, and 43 percent of its labor force. Though the number of working women has significantly increased, there continues to be a disparity between women's and men's salaries.
Statistics give undeniable evidence that Canadian women earn only 63 percent of the wages of their male counterparts. LaBella and Leach (1983) have emphasized that for many working women, it is no longer all right merely to participate in the work force — women want to be in leadership roles and positions of authority which enable them to formulate policies and make decisions. Today's working women are pioneers; they are breaking new ground every day, adopting strategies to bring them greater economic equality.

The fear of ending up like women we all know, who looked to marriage for security and ended up alone and desperate, has forced many women today, married or single, to look for security in their careers (Friedan, 1981). The results of the present study may have indicated that men had found such security in their careers, or simply were unable to express their dissatisfaction as freely as their female counterparts. Perhaps the women in the study reported greater dissatisfaction with their present level of achievement because they had not yet found the job security they were seeking.

The results of the present study also indicated a tendency for males to score higher than females in believing that their achievements were the result of true ability. A number of researchers have found that a woman's high performance is seen as indicating high levels of luck (Deaux & Farris, 1977; Simon & Feather, 1973; Deaux & Taynor, 1973). Other researchers have reported that a woman's high level of performance is seen as indicating high levels of effort (Etaugh & Brown, 1975; Feldman -
Summers & Kiesler, 1974; Taynor & Deaux, 1975). Yet other researchers have reported that a woman's high performance is attributable to task ease (Feather & Simon, 1975; Rosenfield & Stephan, 1978). In each of these experiments, a man's high performance led to inferences of his high ability but a woman's did not. A woman's high performance was attributed to anything but high ability.

Heilman and Guzzo (1978) conducted a study to test the consequences of attributions for performance evaluation. Descriptions of fictitious successful employees were given to MBA students, who were requested to indicate the appropriateness of two organizational rewards—salary increases and promotions. The descriptions of the equally successful employees included a statement about the reasons for the employee's success. The causes for success included effort, task ease, good luck, and ability. Neither of the organization rewards were seen as preferable to no action when success had been attributed to task ease or luck. Salary increases were seen as equally appropriate for success attributed to ability and success attributed to effort. Promotions, however, were reserved only for those employees whose success had been attributed to ability. This is particularly significant because promotions are the most highly valued organizational rewards.

According to Hansen and O'Leary (1985) Heilman and Guzzo's results have interesting implications within the framework of sex-determined attributions. If a man's success is more likely than a woman's to be attributed to high ability, he is more
likely to receive promotions for his success. But are women, whose success is more likely than men's to be attributed to effort, just as likely as men to receive salary increases? Clearly, the fact that women receive about 37 percent less remuneration than their male counterparts for their performance would seem to argue against this position.

The sexes agree on differential causal perceptions of women and men (including their own). As noted by Hansen and O'Leary (1985) as long as women's success is attributed to luck, effort, task ease, or other compensatory factors, their achievements will not be recognized as reflecting their competence. Further, the authors noted that as long as women's effort is interpreted as being compensatory to their ability, they will be disadvantaged in performance evaluation.

The results of the present study indicated that the women showed a stronger tendency in believing their charming personalities to be responsible for making a strong impression on authority figures in comparison to their male peers.

Typical socialization patterns, pressure women to be as physically attractive as possible while possessing exceptional affiliation and interpersonal skills. According to Bardwick (1971) girls who are bright enough to do well in school, internalize their academic success as an important part of their self-identity, at least before puberty. At adolescence however, the criteria for self-approval change. As the pressure to attract boys becomes more important and crucial to feelings of self-worth, affiliation needs generally become more important.
At this point, according to the author, academically successful girls have "bisexual" identities. They perceive themselves as feminine girls who are able to compete successfully academically, but they are aware that public competitive success threatens social success. The message is conveyed to girls through parental expectations, peer reactions, and by their own internal criteria of femininity. Furthermore, Bardwick noted that in terms of their own needs, self-definitions, and behaviours, they begin to define themselves primarily in terms of the gratification of affiliative motives, with achievement needs becoming subsidiary.

According to Clance and Imes (1978) women who believe they have used their charming personalities to gain approval from authority figures, are encouraged to risk "being themselves" and seeing what happens. The authors emphasized that catastrophic expectations rarely occur.

The results of the present study also revealed a stronger tendency for females than for males to predict lower expectancies of success before undertaking a project. Indeed many studies, support the contention that low self-confidence may be a problem more characteristic of women than men. Women are clearly more likely than men to express lower expectations of success in achievement situations (Crandall, 1969; Lenney, 1977; Feather & Simon, 1973; House & Perney, 1974). Battle (1966) found that girls in seventh and ninth grades expected to do less well than boys in their English classes. Female college students anticipated doing less well than their male peers when asked to
imagine themselves practicing in each of seven professions, including the relatively female-oriented field of pediatrics (Feldman - Summers & Kiesler, 1974).

Females tend to be more anxious about failure than are males, and their anxiety increases during elementary school years more than that of males (Stein & Bailey, 1973). Many young girls and women obviously do achieve in spite of their anxiety about failure. However, generally, the fear has more easily observable effects on the behaviour of females than of males. Sex differences appear early and are relatively persistent (Kagan & Moss, 1962).

What are the implications for a woman's capacity to achieve if she underestimates her ability? As Feather (1966) pointed out, individuals who approach tasks with a low expectancy of success, are likely to perform less well than those with higher expectations. Females who tend to underestimate their ability, may take themselves out of the running, refraining from attempting or continuing with new achievement activities. Also, as was mentioned previously, women tend to blame themselves for failures which further exacerbates this tendency. It should be understood however, that although the sexes predict different levels of performance, there is little difference in actual performance (Crandall, 1969; Donelson, 1977a).

O'Leary (1974) reported findings that showed a positive relationship between self-esteem and exhibition of sex-role appropriate behaviour. When a task is explicitly labeled "feminine", women are more confident that they will do well than
if the task is labeled "masculine" or unlabeled (Basow, 1980). When the task is labeled "feminine", women expect to do as well as men (Deaux, 1976).

According to Basow (1980) the sex difference in self-confidence may be a result of differential reinforcement history for males and females. Males may be rewarded for being confident; females may be rewarded for being modest about their abilities. Further, the author suggested that the difference may be linked to the different cultural norms that permit females more than males to admit to low self-confidence. For change to occur, the female stereotype must be divested at the most basic level - the family - of its implied incompetence. Parents must not provide subtle cues that convey lower expectancies for girls than for boys. Parents must also give appropriate feedback and strategies for improving performances and provide competent female models (Basow, 1980).

Although the results of the present study appear to have indicated that the sexes were relatively free of impostor feelings, it is suggested that more sensitive test instruments be developed and tested before widespread "impostor-free" attitudes are considered reliable. Further, an investigation of the relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and locus of control orientations of respondents is suggested. Internally-oriented people tend to believe that reinforcers are subject to their own control and occur as a result of displaying their skills. Externals, in contrast, see little or no connection between their behaviour and various reinforcers. Clearly, studies examining the relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and locus of
control are warranted.

The results of the present study, in terms of the modified Harvey IP Scale, further suggest that more sensitive test instruments be developed to assess differences in self-perceived attitudes of fraudulence among the sexes. While it is not suggested by the results that educators are victims of the Impostor Phenomenon, the indication that women tend to express difficulty connecting various internal qualities to their achievements is cause for some concern. It is necessary to help women to understand the cause and effect relationship between what they do and their success. Educational sectors and women themselves, are encouraged to devise plans to assist women in recognizing such relationships. Women and their society will then benefit from women's increased ability to realize their career potentials.
References


Table 1
The Modified Harvey (IP) Scale

This survey is to provide the data from my Master's Thesis. The results of the study will be made available upon request at a later time.

Please relax, for there are no right or wrong answers. A series of questions will be presented to which you will be required to indicate the answers most true of you. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your participation with this survey.

Suzanne R. Jamail
PLEASE INDICATE:

Male

Female

Marital Status

Age

Present Occupation

Occupational Aspirations

For each question below, place an X in the box that best indicates how true of you the statement is. Simply provide your first response to the given items.

1. People tend to believe I am more competent than I actually am.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I know my present level of achievement results from true ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. At times, I worry that I will be discovered for who I really am.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
4. It's easy for me to accept compliments about my competence.

NOT AT ALL TRUE  
A  B  C  D  E  F  G  

VERY TRUE

5. I believe I deserve whatever recognition, honors, or praise I receive.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

VERY TRUE

6. Sometimes I feel that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of luck.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

VERY TRUE

7. I am confident that I will succeed in the future.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

VERY TRUE

8. In general, I feel like a phony.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

VERY TRUE

9. My charming personality tends to make a strong impression on people in authority.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A  B  C  D  E  F  G

VERY TRUE
10. I believe my accomplishments are adequate for this stage in my life.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

11. In discussions, if I disagree with my professor, boss, or the person in charge, I speak out.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

12. I have often excelled on a task even though I was afraid I would not succeed before undertaking the project.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

13. In general, I feel I am keeping secrets about myself from others.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

14. My public and private self are one and the same.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A    B    C    D    E    F    G
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People tend to believe I am more competent than I actually am.</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my present level of achievement results from true ability.</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times, I worry that I will be discovered for who I really am.</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's easy for me to accept compliments about my competence.</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I deserve whatever recognition, honors, or praise I receive.</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I feel that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of luck.</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I will succeed in the future.</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, I feel like a phony.</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My charming personality tends to make a strong impression on people in authority.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe my accomplishments are adequate for this stage in my life.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In discussions, if I disagree with my professor, boss, or the person in charge, I speak out.</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have often excelled on a task even though I was afraid I would not succeed before undertaking the project.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, I feel I am keeping secrets about myself from others.</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My public and private self are one and the same.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>29.38</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>28.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant at .05 level
** The highest possible IP score
VITA AUCTORIS

Suzanne Jamail was born on May 25, 1962 in Windsor, Ontario to Charles and Jo-Ann Jamail. She graduated from St. Anne's High School with a Secondary School Honour Graduation Diploma in January of 1981. That same month, she enrolled at the University of Windsor to study Psychology. She graduated with the Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in June, 1985. In September 1985, she enrolled in the Masters of Education program at the University of Windsor.

Suzy is currently working towards her Ph.D. in School Psychology.
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THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON AND HIGH-ACHIEVING
MEN AND WOMEN: ISSUES OF SEX AND SELF-
PERCEIVED ATYPICALITY

by

Suzanne R. Jamail

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
Through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Education at the
University of Windsor

1986
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Abstract

The effects of respondents' sex on self-perceived attitudes of intellectual fraudulence were examined. Several groups of students comprising 143 subjects, completed a modified version of the Harvey Impostor Phenomenon Scale, consisting of a series of work and academic related questions. Although it was found to be nonsignificant, discriminant function analysis indicated that four items were the most useful of all test items in predicting differences between male and female respondents. Analysis of variance revealed no significant sex differences on any of the dependent variables. Overall, respondents reported very similar low ratings of fraudulent experiences. Though unable to show statistical significance, women tended to display a greater frequency of fraudulent behaviour. More sensitive tests to assess sex differences with regards to self-perceived attitudes of intellectual fraudulence were suggested.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It's a feeling of intense anxiety. Each time I receive a new assignment, I panic, thinking that this time, I won't be able to "pull it off." I've been lucky so far, but if my luck runs out, I'll be exposed as a fraud and lose everything.

- Jackie, Corporate Executive

When we hear words like impostor, phony and fraud, images of people who set out to deceive us come to mind. But, consider the individual who despite inarguable job success, feels that she doesn't really deserve her success and furthermore, feels that she has been fooling others into thinking that she is much more intelligent and competent than she actually is. She is anxious as she anticipates what will happen when others "find her out." She is convinced that anything short of "perfection" will lead to public humiliation and exposure as a fraud.

On another level, she is aware of the fact that she has excelled in school, earned the correct degrees, received awards and praise from her colleagues, and advanced rapidly within her career. Despite the evidence, none of her success seems earned.

Why would such a person consider herself a fraud? She is a victim of the Impostor Phenomenon. Although the Impostor Phenomenon is not a new problem, it wasn't until 1974 that the syndrome even had a name. Dr. Pauline Clance and Dr. Suzanne
Imes, psychologists from Georgia State University, coined the term "Impostor Phenomenon." They had been observing the phenomenon for several years, studying a number of successful college students and professional women who had one striking thing in common: a conviction that their academic and career success was unrelated to their own ability. At any moment, each feared, she would be exposed as an impostor (Clance & Imes, 1978). According to Harvey and Katz (1985), the Impostor Phenomenon is a psychological syndrome. The syndrome or pattern, is based on intense, secret feelings of fraudulence in the face of valid, tangible accomplishments. An IP victim believes that she doesn't deserve her success because she attributes it to some mysterious fluke, luck or great effort or anything but ability.

The sense of being a fraud, is only part of the Impostor Phenomenon. Persons with IP feelings experience considerable self-doubt and worry excessively. Although IP victims are often people who are driven to succeed, they're frightened that they cannot repeat their accomplishments. They remember all their difficult times more than their successes or the tasks they previously completed with ease. Victims of the Impostor Phenomenon are caught up in a cycle of thoughts, emotions, and actions that can virtually control their lives (Harvey & Katz, 1985). According to the authors, to a victim of the Impostor Phenomenon, other people make the "mistake" of thinking she is more gifted and intelligent than she actually is. She remains secretly convinced that she is mediocre, unqualified, and
incompetent.

According to Crance (1985), seventy percent of successful people have felt themselves to be an impostor for at least one period of their lives. IP victims are people who lead perfectly normal lives. They marry, have children, and often excel in their work. They are regular people like you and me, and the Jones' down the street (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

The Impostor Phenomenon is not selective about choosing its victims. Men and women, young and old, and members of all races suffer from fraudulent feelings. Further, the Impostor Phenomenon affects people in all occupations. It is true however, that if you feel like an impostor, you must have accomplished some type of success, something about which to feel fraudulent. It must be noted however, that the idea of success does not only refer to the top-of-the ladder, rich-and-famous kind of success. The Impostor Phenomenon is related to how you feel about a particular role you are playing (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

While men and women are plagued by impostor feelings, some researchers believe that the problem may be a bigger career headache for women because of certain societal pressures. According to Matthews (1984) women come into the workplace feeling they have to "prove" themselves more than men do. Further, many career women are still afraid to own up to their abilities for fear of seeming arrogant or unfeminine.

In 1985, I began studying the Impostor Phenomenon. As an undergraduate, working towards my Honours B.A. in psychology, I
had always done well and received mostly A's throughout my educational career. Yet despite the accomplishments achieved, I experienced some doubt about my intelligence and my ability to be a successful career woman. I watched many of my friends experience similar feelings. We felt unique however, and did not realize that our experience—the Impostor Phenomenon—was very prevalent among other success-seekers.

Based on my own experiences which were consistent with previous ideas on the Impostor Phenomenon, I assumed this syndrome would be more of a problem for women than for men. Having realized it was necessary to measure this assumption objectively, I devised a slightly modified version of the empirically tested Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale. The test instrument was given to 143 subjects enrolled in the Principals' Course offered at the Faculty of Education (University of Windsor). It was hypothesized that female respondents would reveal more intense experiences of intellectual fraudulence as evidenced by their significantly higher mean IP Scale score.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on the topic as it relates to differential attribution of success and failure by men and women. Chapter 3 includes a description of subjects, materials, and procedures used to carry out the study. Chapter 4 provides statistical interpretation of the data. Chapter 5 discusses the statistical findings and offers suggestions for future studies.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although the Impostor Phenomenon is not a new problem, scientific examination of the issue at present, remains in the exploratory stages. Consequently, there exists a paucity of experimental studies resulting in a dependence upon the leading contributors of IP research as major sources of information for the present study.

The present study aims to add to the findings of impostor research by shedding more light on an area of secret conflict.

The Impostor Phenomenon is a psychological syndrome based on intense, secret feelings of fraudulence in the face of success and achievement. Success is never truly fulfilling to the IP victim because he is always too busy trying to make sure no one "finds him out". Victims of the Impostor Phenomenon are often individuals who are driven to achieve but live in fear that each new undertaking will reveal them as fakes (Clance, 1985; Harvey & Katz, 1985).

As reported by Harvey and Katz (1985), there are three basic signs of the Impostor Phenomenon that are present in anyone who is an IP victim. They include the following:

1) The sense of having fooled others into overestimating your ability.
2) The attribution of your success to some factor other than intelligence or ability.
3) The fear of being exposed as a fake.
It is believed that the most dominant characteristic of IP victims is their inability to hear and believe the compliments of others, and to accept the objective evidence regarding their achievements or intellectual ability (Clance, 1985). Others view their accomplishments as evidence that they are qualified and capable, but, IP victims see things differently. The person with "impostor" feelings lives with the feeling that he is not what he appears to be. A discrepancy develops between the way he views himself and the way in which others view him (Harvey & Katz, 1985). This discrepancy is the first sign of the Impostor Phenomenon.

A victim of the Impostor Phenomenon is painfully aware of the difference between his public and private image and as a result, he feels like a phony who has been fooling everybody. He suffers from an inability to "internalize" or take credit for his success. Even as his successes accumulate, he cannot accept them as evidence of his own talents and abilities. So how does the IP victim explain a new promotion, a salary increase, or praise from his colleagues? According to Harvey and Katz (1985) the impostor does have an explanation for his success and this is where sign number two makes its appearance.

The impostor believes he is an intellectual fraud who has attained success because he knew someone in power, was at the right place at the right time, or worked harder than anybody else in his office. He may believe that his success is due to his good looks, charm, social skills or simply a matter of good luck. Victims of the Impostor Phenomenon attribute their success
to every reason except the real one — ability (Clance, 1985; Harvey & Katz, 1985). Since the impostor believes his success is the result of something "external" to himself, he is certain that other people are wrong about him. He is unable to experience any lasting enjoyment of his success because he is preoccupied with the thought of being exposed as a fake (Harvey & Katz, 1985). We have arrived at sign number three: the fear of exposure.

The person with IP feelings experiences terror when he anticipates that "the big one" is coming. The "big one", as described by Harvey and Katz (1985), is any event that has the potential to expose one as a fake. As stated by a self-declared female impostor, "I was convinced that I would be exposed as a phony when I took my comprehensive doctoral examination. I thought the final test had come" (Clance & Imes, 1978).

Since the IP victim panics at the thought of being exposed as a fake, he often suffers from another fear. This is the fear of failing. To the impostor, any failure will undoubtedly lead to the humiliation and nationwide exposure as a fraud. Impostors seek perfection in almost every aspect of their performance. They expect to perform every task flawlessly and with ease. Anything short of perfection or genius will activate the impostor's feelings of self-doubt. So it must be understood that any event considered significant to the victim has the potential to destroy everything for which he has ever worked (Harvey & Katz, 1985; Clance, 1985).

Despite the fact that the Impostor Phenomenon is a very real and debilitating problem for many people, it often goes
unrecognized and untreated. When someone believes he is a fake, he chooses not to let this "fact" become public knowledge (Harvey & Katz, 1985). As several psychologists have observed, "impostor" feelings are rarely stated as the presenting problem by those entering psychotherapy. Since these feelings comprise a well-guarded secret, clients may choose to talk about a variety of other problems (Clance & Imes, 1978). According to Harvey and Katz (1985), some of the most common complaints are insomnia, procrastination, pounding of the heart, and tension in the neck, shoulders, or jaw. Further, IP symptoms may include more extreme conditions such as alcohol or drug abuse, eating disorders, and obsessive-compulsive thoughts. It is true of course, that these symptoms may also be experienced by the non-impostor. However, as the authors suggested, over time feelings of fraudulence and the dread of exposure can lead to such signs of stress. An impostor may not understand exactly what the problem is, but he is aware of the fact that something is definitely wrong.

If someone is suffering from feelings of fraudulence and a fear of being exposed, then why may he not understand what the problem is as was suggested by Harvey and Katz (1985)? The authors reported that the IP victim does not see his belief that he is a fake as something that can be treated or changed. He doesn't think: "I feel like a fake." Instead, he thinks: "I am a fake." In their minds, IP victims believe that they truly are impostors who have been fooling everyone into thinking they are something they are not.

People often make the mistake in believing that the Impostor
Phenomenon and insecurity or low self-esteem are one and the same. As noted by Harvey and Katz (1985), there is a relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and insecurity, but, insecurity is a very broad concept, encompassing a wide spectrum of feelings and behaviours. It is true, that insecurity involves feelings of self-doubt and a lack of self-confidence that are in fact, experienced by the IP victim. However, as the authors have emphasized, insecurity is not a specific syndrome with specific, identifiable symptoms. In contrast, the Impostor Phenomenon, is a very distinct type of insecurity. The IP is a syndrome that can be clearly defined and identified. The Impostor Phenomenon is not simply a matter of "being insecure". The IP is comprised of a series of very specific feelings with specific ways of thinking and behaving, and unlike general insecurity, it is associated with a strong desire to achieve at some level.

Harvey and Katz (1985) made the point that a person may feel insecure without feeling like an impostor. For example, one type of insecurity is the fear of losing everything, only to be left alone, lonely and poor. This fear may be rooted in the past trauma, such as sudden poverty, or perhaps, abandonment by a parent. Many IP victims share this fear, but, in this instance, the basis of this fear rests in the idea that they will be exposed as fakes.

Similarly, there exists another difference between general insecurity and the Impostor Phenomenon in terms of how people deal with each problem. The insecure person may or may not show it in his behaviour. He may choose to discuss his insecurity
with a friend. It is unlikely that the insecure person will experience shame and fear of being exposed as an impostor (Harvey & Katz, 1985). On the other hand, the authors make the point that the impostor will undoubtedly choose to keep his fraudulent feelings to himself. The negative connotations are far greater for the impostor than they are for the insecure person. In addition, it is typical for the IP victim to see his condition as unchangeable or untreatable.

Traditionally, self-esteem has been considered to be an all-or-nothing situation. In other words, a person either has esteem for himself in all areas or he does not have it in any areas at all. Generally, self-esteem refers to a feeling of overall, positive self-regard. For the IP victim, this is not the case. The person with IP feelings often has a very positive regard for many of the qualities he possesses while at the same time, feeling like an impostor in one specific area (Harvey & Katz, 1985). It must be understood however, that he feels perfectly fine about himself in areas outside this one. It is his belief that he is lacking only some quality significantly related to his role. Such qualities may include intelligence, management skills, creativity, or any skill that is relevant to his line of work. Further, as noted by the authors, the person with low self-esteem is generally not driven to achieve. On the other hand, the IP sufferer commonly feels a very intense need to achieve. It can be said then, that the person with very low self-esteem is missing something essential to the definition of an IP victim. Those with low self-esteem often remain at the
bottom of the totem pole while impostors, usually have self-esteem high enough to allow them to reach the top.

As well, it should be mentioned, that the one quality the impostor believes he is missing also happens to be the one he believes is the true sign of ability. He attributes his success to a personal asset he knows he possesses such as a charming personality, or good looks. Although the impostor takes his ability for granted, he places too much emphasis on his good looks or personality when trying to explain his accomplishments (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

According to Harvey and Katz (1985), there are several ways the Impostor Phenomenon can manifest itself, each in its own way reinforcing the victim's feelings of fraudulence. Let us consider the 3 major types of impostors the Workaholic, the Magical Thinker and the Charmer.

THE WORKAHOLIC

It is obvious that not all workaholics are victims of the Impostor Phenomenon. However, workaholism is one of the behaviour patterns of the IP syndrome. The IP Workaholic attributes his achievement to his compulsive efforts. IP Workaholics are so terrified of failing, that they approach every project or task as though it were crucial. Each performance event holds the potential of being "the big one" - exposing them as fakes to the world. Workaholic IP victims are generally very successful in attaining the goals they set for themselves because they are intelligent and competent individuals. In the mind of the IP Workaholic, every task is given equal weight and
consequently, he never "slacks off" to any extent. As a result of never experimenting with his level of effort, he is unable to learn whether or not his own innate ability would carry him through, and so, he believes that without engaging in Herculean efforts, he would be exposed as a fraud.

THE MAGICAL THINKER

The IP Magical Thinker engages in constant, ritualistic worrying about his performance characterized by repeated visions of failure. Since they are often intelligent and competent individuals, these IP victims typically succeed in the end. However, they always pair worrying with success and therefore, see it as an essential ingredient. Thus, to the IP Magical Thinker, thoughts about failure become superstitiously linked with efforts toward achievement. Further, these IP victims always maintain a pessimistic attitude about future success. Optimistic thoughts about success are forbidden because the Magical Thinker believes these thoughts will cause him to fail. In other words, emotionally, the Magical Thinker believes that if he were to anticipate doing well, fate would punish him by making him fail. Intellectually however, the Magical Thinker knows that worrying is not responsible for his achievements.

THE CHARMER

The IP Charmer uses the power of his personality assets the way the IP Workaholic uses hard labor - to distract others from what he believes are his pitiful shortcomings. Typically, the IP Charmer is a high achieving, attractive, witty, socially adept, and extremely likeable individual. People enjoy spending time in
his company.

In high-school, these individuals were well-liked and very popular among their peers. It is true, that not everyone who possesses a charming personality believes himself to be a fraud. The IP Charmer however, attributes his success to his good looks or social skills, rather than to his innate ability. As reported by Harvey and Katz (1985), Charmers believe that their likeability and personal attractiveness create a "halo" effect that clouds the judgement of others, including experts.

Although an IP Charmer may be male or female, it is pointed out that there are some aspects to this pattern that are of particular concern for women. It is quite obvious, that our culture places a very high value on physical attractiveness — this being especially true for women. As a result, most women are driven to attain the "ideal" of beauty. To make matters even worse, many women have grown up with the notion that they must not be too aggressive for they will appear to be unfeminine and hence undesirable by men. Instead, women have been socialized directly or indirectly, to use their social skills to get what they want (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

This is a double-edged sword for women. As explained by the authors, women who attempt to meet these standards of beauty and charm, may see themselves as not revealing "the true me" and therefore, feel at odds with behaviour they have been taught is "correct" and desirable for women. When a woman attributes her achievements to her good looks or charming personality, she ignores the real cause of her success — ability. If however, she
chooses to downplay her appearance and social charm, she deprives herself of her natural assets.

Why do so many intelligent and talented individuals, despite objective evidence, continue to see themselves as impostors who have fooled everyone into thinking they are far more intelligent and competent than they actually are? Perhaps a discussion of the origins and dynamics of the phenomenon is in order.

According to Clance and Imes (1978) impostors typically fall into one of two groups. For the first group children, early in life, are often assigned a particular role to play within the family. The impostor was usually labeled the "sensitive" or "socially adept" one, while a sibling was designated the "intelligent" member of the family. A child's label distinguishes him from the other members of his family and it can become an important part of his identity.

According to Harvey and Katz (1985) a label implies a whole world of meaning about what a child can and cannot accomplish, and what role he is expected to play throughout his life. The implication from the family as indicated by Clance and Imes (1978), was that the "sensitive" or socially adept child could never prove that he was as bright as his "intelligent" sibling, regardless of what he accomplished intellectually. One part of the child believed the family myth was true; another part of him wanted to prove them wrong. In school, the child was given the opportunity to prove himself intellectually. He was successful in obtaining outstanding grades and acclaim from his teachers. He felt good about his performance and hoped his family would
acknowledge that he was more than just sensitive or charming.

Unfortunately, the family continued to focus on his label, overlooking his intellectual accomplishments, while attributing greater intelligence to the "bright" sibling whose academic performance was often poorer by comparison. As a result, the child continued to be driven to prove himself intellectually, but at the same time, believed that his family was right (Clance & Imes, 1978). As Harvey and Katz (1985) have pointed out, when a child feels he must adopt only one role, he finds it difficult to accept the evidence that he has succeeded in other roles. It is not easy for him to see himself as multidimensional, capable of performing well in more than one role. This situation feels wrong to the child, causing him to experience conflict and doubt. Thus, the Impostor Phenomenon emerges.

For the second group of impostors, a different family dynamic was present. The message conveyed to the child was that he was perfect in every way possible. In the family members' eyes, there was nothing that the child could not do if he set his mind to it. Problems arose however, when the child experienced difficulty in achieving certain tasks. Although the child felt obligated to live up to his family's expectations, he knew that he could not possibly be "perfect" forever. Since he was indiscriminately praised for everything he did, he began to distrust his parents' perceptions of himself, and more importantly, he began to doubt himself (Clance & Imes, 1978). Furthermore, the authors noted that when the child went to school, his doubts about his abilities intensified because he
found it impossible to produce outstanding work if he did not study and work hard. Having internalized his parents' definition of intelligence as "perfection with ease", and realizing that he could not meet this standard, he reasoned that he must be stupid. Since he was not a genius, he must have been an intellectual impostor; an IP victim.

By now, we are well aware of the fact that impostors have a dreaded fear of failure. Paradoxically however, many IP victims are unconsciously fearful of success as well. As Harvey and Katz (1985) have suggested, every situation that holds the potential for success, also holds the potential for failure. Furthermore, the authors noted that in the mind of an impostor, the more successful he becomes, the more he fears failure of an even larger magnitude.

Impostors offer many explanations as to why they fear success. Some IP victims report that they are afraid that they will become the object of resentment and envy. Other victims worry that their successful performances will lead to more responsibility and hence, more pressure. Still there are impostors who fear the consequences of a psychological separation from their families if they become more successful than their parents or siblings. As the authors have emphasized, the person who is fearful of success, must somehow be protected against this fear. He may decide that the best method of protection is simply not to succeed. Another defense available to him, is to make the effort to succeed, but somehow sabotage himself. Finally, he may choose to attain success in reality but find some way to deny it
psychologically. He can protect himself psychologically by believing himself to be an impostor.

Thus far, our focus has been on understanding the more personal and experiential effects of impostor feelings. Let us now look at the experimental findings of attribution theorists, who in recent years, have begun to study differential attribution of success and failure by men and women.

There is considerable evidence that clearly document lower expectancies for female than male performance on tasks involving intellectual mastery (Deaux & Emms, 1974; Frieze, 1975). Expectancies about one's own performance are also low; women generally expect to fail (Stein & Bailey, 1973).

Deaux (1976) found that there are also sex differences in causal attributions for success and failure. Men are more likely than women to attribute their success to enduring, stable, internal factors such as ability, while attributing failure, to external factors such as bad luck or an extremely difficult task. Women, on the other hand, tend to attribute success to temporary, unstable, external causes, such as effort and luck. When it comes to failure, women are more willing than men to accept personal responsibility, claiming that a lack of ability is the cause of their failure.

According to Deaux and Emms (1974) under identical circumstances and when they are engaged in identical behaviours, the performance of males and females is attributed to different sources. For example, Feldman - Summers and Kiesler (1974) asked male and female college students to attribute causes for the
success of Dr. Mark or Dr. Marcia Greer, who had successfully completed medical school and had set up a surgical practice. Male subjects in particular attributed more ability to the male physician. They suggested that the female physician had been successful because she had had an easier task and because she had tried harder. The women in the study agreed that the female physician had tried harder than that of a comparable male.

As Harvey and Katz (1985) noted, the attribution process is undoubtedly more harmful to women than it is to men. For instance, when a woman fails at a task, she blames herself for her lack of ability. When she succeeds however, she is unable to take credit for it, attributing her "good fortune" to an external source such as luck.

According to Peters (1974) when a woman enters a profession such as medicine, law, or higher education, she collides with long-held social stereotypes. It is difficult for her to tolerate these contradictions because they interfere with her sense of self-identity. Men, however, experience neither contradictions nor identity problems since professions are typically thought of as male.

Clance and Imes (1978) cited Horner's (1972) research on women's fear of success in relation to their studies of women with fraudulent feelings. As indicated by the author, many women have a motive to avoid success out of fear that they will be rejected or considered less feminine if they do in fact succeed. Horner (1968) claimed that the fear of success in women is a result of sex-role training which places societal restrictions on
their achievement. Early in life, women come to acknowledge these restrictions and the consequences that will accrue if violated. The author suggested, that women perhaps, cannot internalize their success unless both their affiliative and achievement needs are met. Further, it was speculated, that women often find themselves in the position of having to choose between love or friendship and success. The feminine role traditionally precludes competitive success. Bardwick (1971) emphasized the incompatibility between "femininity" and the personality characteristics required to succeed in the workplace. The author made the point that women are socialized to be gentle, warm, nurturant, nonaggressive, and noncompetitive; yet successful working people need to be aggressive, dominant, analytical, competitive, and most importantly, "masculine". Females desiring success in traditionally masculine roles, risk social rejection, loss of femininity, and occupational discrimination (Bernard, 1976; Rohrbaugh, 1979). Maccoby (1963) asserted that the girl who maintains qualities of independence and achievement-oriented behaviour, defies gender-appropriate behaviour and must "pay a price in anxiety". The outcome of this situation may indeed be fear of success as suggested by Horner (1968).

According to Sutherland and Veroff (1985), similar reasoning can be applied to the situation of males. Traditional sex-role training for men focuses on the display of excellent performance in the competitive arena. Quite obviously over-concern with making or keeping friends would interfere with competition.
Furthermore, the authors noted that men, because they are not traditionally taught the value of social interaction to the same degree as women, may have to disengage themselves from the social concerns of an achievement situation in order to succeed.

Horner (1968) asked male and female college students from the University of Michigan, to write a story beginning with the following one: "After first term finals, Anne (John) finds herself (himself) at the top of her (his) medical school class. The rationale for this story-telling approach was that students would hopefully, identify with the fictitious characters, projecting their own feelings of success on to the stimulus figures. Horner's study found that 62 percent of the female respondents and 10 percent of the male respondents wrote stories concerning the negative consequences of Anne's or John's success. As indicated by Harvey and Katz (1985), Horner's (1968) research was later replicated but this time, both "Anne and John" stories were given to male and female respondents. The results of the study indicated that the majority of both sexes suggested that "Anne" would have to pay dearly for her success, while "John" would suffer far fewer penalties. As indicated by their responses, the students expected that "Anne" would be punished in some way because she had violated the female sex-role stereotype.

Tresemer (1976, 1977) has reviewed the research on fear of success that has accumulated since Horner's (1968) study. Of major concern, has been whether fear of success imagery is a reflection of achievement motivation or merely the predictably stereotyped response to a woman's success. A number of studies
have tested whether fear of success is a function of the gender of the cue character. In general, more fear of success imagery is written by females to the "Anne" cue than to the "John" cue (Condry & Dyer, 1976; Monahan, Kuhn, & Shaver, 1974; Tresemer, 1976, 1977). This is not true for males. According to Sutherland and Veroff (1985) if fear of success is simply a matter of responding to a stereotype, both men and women should write more fear of success stories to the "Anne" cue. Thus, the authors claimed that the fear of success is not completely determined by stereotypical responses, but the gender of the stimulus figure does have some effect on females. One explanation of this, as noted by the authors, may be the greater identification with a same-sexed stimulus figure for females, in conjunction with their greater willingness to express negative affect.

According to Clance and Imes (1978) if a high-achieving woman believes herself to be an intellectual phony or impostor, she allows herself to live out her achievement orientation while avoiding the negative consequences of her sex-role violation.

In examining the Impostor Phenomenon in relation to differential attribution of success and failure by men and women, the present study attempted to determine the effects of respondents' sex on a self-administered measure of the IP by respondents aspiring to be educational administrators. It was hypothesized that female respondents would reveal more intense experiences of intellectual fraudulence as evident by their significantly higher mean I-P Scale score.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Subjects

A total of 143 subjects, comprised of 12 groups, participated in the study. Seventy-seven males and sixty-six females enrolled in the Principals' Course offered at the Faculty of Education (University of Windsor), comprised the groups. All subjects were employed in various facets of the teaching profession, and all were experimentally naive.

Materials

The test instrument contained two sections: demographic data, and a modified version of the Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale. All test items required a response on a 7-point Likert scale which ranged from "Not at all true" to Very true." A covering page was included with each questionnaire to ensure confidentiality and to state instructions.

Demographic data requested included the subjects' sex, age, occupation, and occupational aspirations. Although data was collected on all demographic variables, the researcher was concerned primarily with the respondents' sex and therefore, only included the other variables to maintain experimental naivety. The Harvey (IP) Scale is comprised of 14 test items. Its author suggests that the scale is designed to identify and measure the strength of the Impostor Phenomenon in an individual. Further, as reported by Harvey & Katz (1985), "The Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale was developed as a substantially reliable
and valid, self-administered, time-efficient method for measuring the Impostor Phenomenon" (p. 245). Since the scale used in the present study was a slightly modified version of the original Harvey (IP) Scale, it was reasoned that measures of reliability and validity would be similar for the two test instruments.

As such, the modified version of the scale was included to identify and compare any similarities and/or differences in IP scores made by male and female respondents.

Insert Table 1 about here

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**Procedure**

Students enrolled in the Principals' Course were asked to participate in the study and completed the questionnaire in class. All subjects completed the questionnaire on an individual basis.

None of the subjects were informed of the purpose of the study prior to their involvement in the study. All subjects were requested to complete the questionnaire in a short time, indicating first impressions to the given questions. Information concerning the study was given to subjects following completion of the questionnaire. Distribution of the test instrument occurred randomly.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The reliability of the test instrument using the Guttman Split-Half technique indicated a coefficient of .57. Several different statistical analyses were applied to the data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data for each test item were analyzed initially in terms of group means, standard deviations, and correlations. The results of correlational analysis indicated that test items 2, 9, and 10 were useful in predicting sex differences at the .05 level of significance. Further, the results of such analysis indicated that test item #10 was the best predictor of sex differences followed by items #9 and #2. Overall, the findings indicated that the sexes reported very similar scores on all dependent variables.

Insert Table 2 about here

The data were then analyzed using a univariate (sex of subject) analysis of variance (ANOVA). Again, it was evident that males and females had reported very similar responses as there were no significant sex differences at the .05 level of significance. Discriminant function analysis was then applied to the data using Wilks' stepwise procedure. Although it was found to be nonsignificant, discriminant analysis produced one function that
was dominated by four variables. In their order of importance they included test item: #10 (I believe my accomplishments are adequate for this stage in my life), #9 (My charming personality tends to make a strong impression on people in authority), #12 (I have often excelled on a task even though I was afraid I would not succeed before undertaking the project), and #2 (I know my present level of achievement results from true ability). Again, although the function was not significantly useful in discriminating between the sexes, it indicated however, that items 10, 9, 12, and 2 were the most useful of all test items in predicting differences between male and female respondents. Further, the results of the analysis provided some interesting trends. For example, it was found that males tended to score higher on items 10 and 2 while females tended to score higher than their male counterparts on items 9 and 12.

A series of one-way ANOVAs were then applied to the data to determine if the trends produced by discriminant analysis were in fact significant. The findings indicated no significant sex differences on any of the dependent variables.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that female respondents would reveal more intense experiences of intellectual fraudulence as compared to their male counterparts, was not confirmed in the present study. Like the findings of Harvey, Kidder, and Sutherland (1981), no statistically significant differences were found to exist between the percentages of men and women who reported impostor feelings.

Similarly, the results of the present study indicated that one's gender alone was ineffective in predicting impostor victims among male and female respondents. According to Harvey and Katz (1985) those who perceive their careers as atypical for a person of their sex, reveal significantly higher degrees of impostor feelings than those who do not — regardless of sex. In other words, the authors noted that impostor feelings are stronger in women who believe they are employed in "male" professions and in men who perceive themselves to be in "female" professions. As Dobson (1986) pointed out, men and women fear the penalties that might result for violating their sex-role stereotype. As a result of this, the author suggested that men and women often choose to avoid engaging in atypical careers altogether.

Peters (1974) maintained that professions are typically thought of as male, particularly those that involve exercising authority and power over others. In general, it has been men in our society who have been encouraged to exercise power, while
women have been socialized to support it. This is not to say that women haven't made great strides in the social, political and economic power arenas of our culture. However, as reminded by Harvey and Katz (1985), old attitudes die hard, leaving many women bound to a rigid formula of "femininity."

Similarly, a man who participates in a traditionally "female" role, may choose to deny his innate capabilities for fear of seeming effeminate or unmasculine. It should be understood however, that a man is most likely to deny or disclaim his natural talents when he is successful in that "female" role. Although sex-role stereotypes are gradually loosening, some people still maintain the stereotype that says there is something suspect about a man who chooses to do a "woman's job" (Harvey & Katz, 1985; Bardwick, 1971).

For the individual who fears success, the Impostor Phenomenon can psychologically protect him from the penalties that might result from having violated his sex-role stereotype, by engaging in a sex-inconsistent role. He worries that he will experience social rejection when significant others are made aware of his "feminine" ways. By believing himself to be an impostor he disconnects himself from his success which psychologically shields him from these possible penalties. If someone believes he is an impostor, he has found a way of convincing himself that he isn't really good at his socially unacceptable role (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

The results of the present study indicated that the sexes reported very similar experiences of fraudulence, as there was no
statistically significant difference in the number of men and women who had reported impostor feelings. With respect to Harvey and Katz' (1985) explanation of the relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and perceived atypicality of one's career, the results of the present study appear to have indicated, that feelings of self-perceived atypicality did not occur among respondents. Perhaps, significant sex differences were not found because female respondents did not perceive themselves as "not belonging" in their teaching positions.

As Peters (1974) pointed out, the thrust of the academic woman's role has been as a teacher, and at this level, women have made their most important contribution. In other words, teaching is not an atypical profession for women. Consistent with these ideas, it is possible that sex differences would have occurred had the respondents been employed in their aspired occupation of educational administration. Traditionally, educational administration has been associated with men. It is believed that females functioning in this role, would perceive themselves as engaging in a sex-role incongruent career, thus increasing their reported incidence of impostor feelings.

The modified Harvey Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale was included in the present study to determine its predictive power concerning attitudes of self-perceived fraudulence. A prior study by Topping (1983) using the original Harvey IP Scale, concluded that the scale items reliably predicted impostor feelings among a sample of 285 University faculty members.

Like the findings of Penland and McCammon (1984) using the
original Harvey (IP) Scale, the results of the present study indicated no significant sex differences between respondents in their experiences of fraudulence. Further, the results of the present study indicated that the vast majority of respondents could be considered "non-impostor" in their attitudes as was evident by their very low IP scores. Topping (1983) however, found a range of scores on the Harvey (IP) Scale where men actually had a significantly higher mean I-P Scale score than women. The lack of such differential scores on the slightly modified Harvey (IP) Scale used in the present study may indicate that the original scale's validity is now restricted.

In trying to understand the trends that were found in the present study, a number of possible explanations have been suggested. For example, it was determined that males tended to score higher than females in believing that their accomplishments were adequate for their present state in life.

According to Mayer (1978) women are allowed to admit their dissatisfactions without censure. Our society not only encourages women to express their feelings openly, but also supports them in doing so. By contrast, since male superiority requires forfeiting the right to be merely human - human enough to admit weakness, men are sternly prohibited from confiding their troubles and confessing their dissatisfactions.

According to Welch (1984) women make up 52 percent of the Canadian population, and 43 percent of its labor force. Though the number of working women has significantly increased, there continues to be a disparity between women's and men's salaries.
Statistics give undeniable evidence that Canadian women earn only 63 percent of the wages of their male counterparts. LaBella and Leach (1983) have emphasized that for many working women, it is no longer all right merely to participate in the work force — women want to be in leadership roles and positions of authority which enable them to formulate policies and make decisions. Today's working women are pioneers; they are breaking new ground every day, adopting strategies to bring them greater economic equality.

The fear of ending up like women we all know, who looked to marriage for security and ended up alone and desperate, has forced many women today, married or single, to look for security in their careers (Friedan, 1981). The results of the present study may have indicated that men had found such security in their careers, or simply were unable to express their dissatisfaction as freely as their female counterparts. Perhaps the women in the study reported greater dissatisfaction with their present level of achievement because they had not yet found the job security they were seeking.

The results of the present study also indicated a tendency for males to score higher than females in believing that their achievements were the result of true ability. A number of researchers have found that a woman's high performance is seen as indicating high levels of luck (Deaux & Farris, 1977; Simon & Feather, 1973; Deaux & Taynor, 1973). Other researchers have reported that a woman's high level of performance is seen as indicating high levels of effort (Etaugh & Brown, 1975; Feldman -
Summers & Kiesler, 1974; Taynor & Deaux, 1975). Yet other researchers have reported that a woman's high performance is attributable to task ease (Feather & Simon, 1975; Rosenfield & Stephan, 1978). In each of these experiments, a man's high performance led to inferences of his high ability but a woman's did not. A woman's high performance was attributed to anything but high ability.

Heilman and Guzzo (1978) conducted a study to test the consequences of attributions for performance evaluation. Descriptions of fictitious successful employees were given to MBA students, who were requested to indicate the appropriateness of two organizational rewards—salary increases and promotions. The descriptions of the equally successful employees included a statement about the reasons for the employee's success. The causes for success included effort, task ease, good luck, and ability. Neither of the organization rewards were seen as preferable to no action when success had been attributed to task ease or luck. Salary increases were seen as equally appropriate for success attributed to ability and success attributed to effort. Promotions, however, were reserved only for those employees whose success had been attributed to ability. This is particularly significant because promotions are the most highly valued organizational rewards.

According to Hansen and O'Leary (1985) Heilman and Guzzo's results have interesting implications within the framework of sex-determined attributions. If a man's success is more likely than a woman's to be attributed to high ability, he is more
likely to receive promotions for his success. But are women, whose success is more likely than men's to be attributed to effort, just as likely as men to receive salary increases? Clearly, the fact that women receive about 37 percent less remuneration than their male counterparts for their performance would seem to argue against this position.

The sexes agree on differential causal perceptions of women and men (including their own). As noted by Hansen and O'Leary (1985) as long as women's success is attributed to luck, effort, task ease, or other compensatory factors, their achievements will not be recognized as reflecting their competence. Further, the authors noted that as long as women's effort is interpreted as being compensatory to their ability, they will be disadvantaged in performance evaluation.

The results of the present study indicated that the women showed a stronger tendency in believing their charming personalities to be responsible for making a strong impression on authority figures in comparison to their male peers.

Typical socialization patterns, pressure women to be as physically attractive as possible while possessing exceptional affiliation and interpersonal skills. According to Bardwick (1971) girls who are bright enough to do well in school, internalize their academic success as an important part of their self-identity, at least before puberty. At adolescence however, the criteria for self-approval change. As the pressure to attract boys becomes more important and crucial to feelings of self-worth, affiliation needs generally become more important.
At this point, according to the author, academically successful girls have "bisexual" identities. They perceive themselves as feminine girls who are able to compete successfully academically, but they are aware that public competitive success threatens social success. The message is conveyed to girls through parental expectations, peer reactions, and by their own internal criteria of femininity. Furthermore, Bardwick noted that in terms of their own needs, self-definitions, and behaviours, they begin to define themselves primarily in terms of the gratification of affiliative motives, with achievement needs becoming subsidiary.

According to Clance and Imes (1978) women who believe they have used their charming personalities to gain approval from authority figures, are encouraged to risk "being themselves" and seeing what happens. The authors emphasized that catastrophic expectations rarely occur.

The results of the present study also revealed a stronger tendency for females than for males to predict lower expectancies of success before undertaking a project. Indeed many studies, support the contention that low self-confidence may be a problem more characteristic of women than men. Women are clearly more likely than men to express lower expectations of success in achievement situations (Crandall, 1969; Lenney, 1977; Feather & Simon, 1973; House & Perney, 1974). Battle (1966) found that girls in seventh and ninth grades expected to do less well than boys in their English classes. Female college students anticipated doing less well than their male peers when asked to
imagine themselves practicing in each of seven professions, including the relatively female-oriented field of pediatrics (Feldman - Summers & Kiesler, 1974).

Females tend to be more anxious about failure than are males, and their anxiety increases during elementary school years more than that of males (Stein & Bailey, 1973). Many young girls and women obviously do achieve in spite of their anxiety about failure. However, generally, the fear has more easily observable effects on the behaviour of females than of males. Sex differences appear early and are relatively persistent (Kagan & Moss, 1962).

What are the implications for a woman’s capacity to achieve if she underestimates her ability? As Feather (1966) pointed out, individuals who approach tasks with a low expectancy of success, are likely to perform less well than those with higher expectations. Females who tend to underestimate their ability, may take themselves out of the running, refraining from attempting or continuing with new achievement activities. Also, as was mentioned previously, women tend to blame themselves for failures which further exacerbates this tendency. It should be understood however, that although the sexes predict different levels of performance, there is little difference in actual performance (Crandall, 1969; Donelson, 1977a).

O’Leary (1974) reported findings that showed a positive relationship between self-esteem and exhibition of sex-role appropriate behaviour. When a task is explicitly labeled “feminine”, women are more confident that they will do well than
if the task is labeled "masculine" or unlabeled (Basow, 1980). When the task is labeled "feminine", women expect to do as well as men (Deaux, 1976).

According to Basow (1980) the sex difference in self-confidence may be a result of differential reinforcement history for males and females. Males may be rewarded for being confident; females may be rewarded for being modest about their abilities. Further, the author suggested that the difference may be linked to the different cultural norms that permit females more than males to admit to low self-confidence. For change to occur, the female stereotype must be divested at the most basic level - the family - of its implied incompetence. Parents must not provide subtle cues that convey lower expectancies for girls than for boys. Parents must also give appropriate feedback and strategies for improving performances and provide competent female models (Basow, 1980).

Although the results of the present study appear to have indicated that the sexes were relatively free of impostor feelings, it is suggested that more sensitive test instruments be developed and tested before widespread "impostor-free" attitudes are considered reliable. Further, an investigation of the relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and locus of control orientations of respondents is suggested. Internally-oriented people tend to believe that reinforcers are subject to their own control and occur as a result of displaying their skills. Externals, in contrast, see little or no connection between their behaviour and various reinforcers. Clearly, studies examining the relationship between the Impostor Phenomenon and locus of
control are warranted.

The results of the present study, in terms of the modified Harvey IP Scale, further suggest that more sensitive test instruments be developed to assess differences in self-perceived attitudes of fraudulence among the sexes. While it is not suggested by the results that educators are victims of the Impostor Phenomenon, the indication that women tend to express difficulty connecting various internal qualities to their achievements is cause for some concern. It is necessary to help women to understand the cause and effect relationship between what they do and their success. Educational sectors and women themselves, are encouraged to devise plans to assist women in recognizing such relationships. Women and their society will then benefit from women's increased ability to realize their career potentials.
References


Table 1

The Modified Harvey (IP) Scale

This survey is to provide the data from my Master's Thesis. The results of the study will be made available upon request at a later time.

Please relax, for there are no right or wrong answers. A series of questions will be presented to which you will be required to indicate the answers most true of you. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your participation with this survey.

Suzanne R. Jamail
PLEASE INDICATE:

Male ______________
Female ______________
Marital Status ______________
Age ______________
Present Occupation ______________
Occupational Aspirations ______________

For each question below, place an X in the box that best indicates how true of you the statement is. Simply provide your first response to the given items.

1. People tend to believe I am more competent than I actually am.
   NOT AT ALL TRUE  ____________________________________________  VERY TRUE
   A B C D E F G

2. I know my present level of achievement results from true ability.
   NOT AT ALL TRUE  ____________________________________________  VERY TRUE
   A B C D E F G

3. At times, I worry that I will be discovered for who I really am.
   NOT AT ALL TRUE  ____________________________________________  VERY TRUE
   A B C D E F G
4. It's easy for me to accept compliments about my competence.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A B C D E F G

5. I believe I deserve whatever recognition, honors, or praise I receive.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A B C D E F G

6. Sometimes I feel that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of luck.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A B C D E F G

7. I am confident that I will succeed in the future.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A B C D E F G

8. In general, I feel like a phony.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A B C D E F G

9. My charming personality tends to make a strong impression on people in authority.

NOT AT ALL TRUE

A B C D E F G
10. I believe my accomplishments are adequate for this stage in my life.

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<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
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<td>C</td>
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11. In discussions, if I disagree with my professor, boss, or the person in charge, I speak out.

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<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
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12. I have often excelled on a task even though I was afraid I would not succeed before undertaking the project.

<table>
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<th>VERY TRUE</th>
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13. In general, I feel I am keeping secrets about myself from others.

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<th>VERY TRUE</th>
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14. My public and private self are one and the same.

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<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>VARIABLE</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 People tend to believe I am more competent than I actually am.</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I know my present level of achievement results from true ability.</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 At times, I worry that I will be discovered for who I really am.</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 It's easy for me to accept compliments about my competence.</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I believe I deserve whatever recognition, honors, or praise I receive.</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Sometimes I feel that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of luck.</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 I am confident that I will succeed in the future.</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 In general, I feel like a phony.</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 My charming personality tends to make a strong impression on people in authority.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 I believe my accomplishments are adequate for this stage in my life.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 In discussions, if I disagree with my professor, boss, or the person in charge, I speak out.</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 I have often excelled on a task even though I was afraid I would not succeed before undertaking the project.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 In general, I feel I am keeping secrets about myself from others.</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 My public and private self are one and the same.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>29.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84.00**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant at .05 level
** The highest possible IP score
VITA AUCTORIS

Suzanne Jamail was born on May 25, 1962 in Windsor, Ontario to Charles and Jo-Ann Jamail. She graduated from St. Anne's High School with a Secondary School Honour Graduation Diploma in January of 1981. That same month, she enrolled at the University of Windsor to study Psychology. She graduated with the Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in June, 1985. In September 1985, she enrolled in the Masters of Education program at the University of Windsor.

Suzy is currently working towards her Ph.D. in School Psychology.