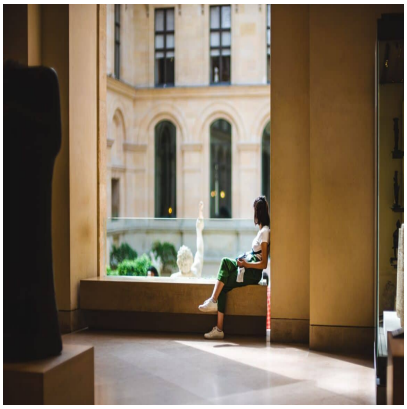


Imposter Syndrome: The Darkness of Exponential Growth

Description

The AutoEthnographer

Imposter Syndrome: The Darkness of Exponential Growth

Authorâ??s Memo

As a graduate student, it is undoubtedly common for many to experience the ugliness of imposter syndrome. And this may be especially more true for first-generation graduate students. First-generation graduate students are the first to experience higher education with little to no insight or guidance on navigating higher education and career paths that they pursue which may lead to a sense of isolation, anxiety, and self-doubt in time. First-generation graduate students are exposed to many different variables at the same time in the mixture of advancement, academics, and pressure from family, friends, and colleagues. So, all of the mentioned variables can influence the overall success of the first-generation graduate student. The impact of imposter syndrome is a variable that has not been explored as much as others from the first person perspective which the present autoethnography intends on exposing.

This autoethnography thus intends on submerging readers into the first-hand experience and exposure of imposter syndrome from a new adjunct instructorâ??s point of view. Throughout the performance, readers will be particularly submerged into the inner thoughts of imposter syndrome along with the actual environment around them. The beginning of the performance first introduces the beginning inner thoughts which then lead up to shocks of imposters syndrome which follows to the remainder of the performance of exposure to imposter syndrome. The approach taken is not only performance-based but also interludes of short stories in between each scene with the intent of telling others about imposter syndrome with a focus of a combination of the roles of first-generation graduate student and adjunct instructor.

All in all, the ultimate takeaway from this performance is a form of advocation for first-time instructors and first-generation graduate students in hopes of shedding light on the inner thoughts and feelings of imposter syndrome in the process of advancement opportunities. So, in this autoethnography, the question that many that struggle with imposter syndrome question if imposter syndrome gets better is

addressed. While embracing the messiness and authenticity of autoethnography, there are many perspectives and focuses captured throughout that highlight the overall struggle of imposter syndrome.

The AutoEthnographer





Falling of negative factors for Pexels by Shvets production

Cast of Characters

Sarah: A Hampton Community College staff member works in supporting other instructors and staff, also a graduate student at Texas Womanâ??s University.

Internal Sarah: The internal thoughts of Sarah.

Adrian: Healthcare program coordinator. Also an instructor at Hampton Community College, Sarahâ??s colleague.

Kathleen: Sarahâ??s supervisor. Also one of the Vice Presidents at Hampton Community College.

Student 1 and 2: Sarahâ??s students in the learning and development course.

Dr. Jones: Director of Columbus Community College, former early childhood development program coordinator. Also a professor.

Dr. Atkins: Biology faculty at Columbus Community College. Also the new director of the Smithfield campus in place of Dr. Jones who used to be the director of the Smithfield campus.

Dr. Jackson: The dean of all academic departments at Columbus Community College.

Scene I February 28, 2022, 2:15pm

[Sarah is sitting in one of many gray cubicles that occupies a large room that is considered the one of the main administrative offices at Hampton Community College. The gray cubicle had just recently been decorated with modern inspirational quotes all over to cover the overwhelming gray. A few staff members also populate other gray cubicles nearby.]

Internal Sarah: Iâ??m bored.

Sarah: I have things I can be working on before going home. What about checking the student database? What about following up on emails?

Internal Sarah: Done and done!

Sarah: Okay, well there is nothing I can do here with school because all my work is saved on my laptop at home. Not even on my Google drive though. So what to do for the next hour till itâ??s time to go home?

Internal Sarah: I could browse the Community College System Job Board website so as to see what is new.

Sarah: But I got it good here! Iâ??ve only been here for six months! Donâ??t you dare!

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: Donâ??t you want to be a professor one day or not stupid?!

Sarah: I do want to do thatâ?¦ But I can work remotely anytime I want! I can afford my tuition finally, and I actually got a cool boss! What more could you ask for?!

Internal Sarah: What about a better job title and also even better pay?

Sarah: Letâ??s just peak. Nothing wrong with just looking right?

Internal Sarah: Finally! Youâ??re really stubborn sometimes.

Sarah: I know. Hey, isnâ??t that where I used to work? Columbus Community College?

Internal Sarah: Yeah, theyâ??re really small. Youâ??re going to have to wait for someone to die if you want to teach there because people never leave. Hey, what is that adjunct instructor position here?

Sarah: I am not sure so letâ??s find out.

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: It looks similar to what I am doing now. Perfect fit. So, do I apply?

Sarah: No, of course donâ??t apply stupid! I got it good here though, remember?

Internal Sarah: I say do it! What do you have to lose? Technically I am not qualified to teach yet since most of the colleges today require at least a masters or higher. If all else fails, then you get experience doing a teaching demonstration and can work from there. No one said you will get the job so itâ??s just practice. If you donâ??t hear back, then you lose nothing. So what do you say?

Sarah: Oh heck with it letâ??s do it..

Interlude

High achievement often comes with great benefits such as recognition, awards, memberships, salaries, titles the list goes on. It is a product from both time, effort, and hard work. It requires not only discipline and critical feedback but also a strong desire for success. There is always a great reward for this kind of achievement.

The only aspect of high achievement that is often not discussed is the storm. This storm often comes at random times, but when it hits, it comes with dark thunder clouds of anxiety, with lightning strikes of internal self-doubt, with hail of others asking questions about your achievements and accomplishments, gusts of wind of rejection from advancement, and rain of overworking. This storm is imposter syndrome.

Scene II March 22, 2022, 2;!5pm Hampton Community College

[Sarah is sitting in her gray cubicle in the administrative office. It is completely silent, yet the computer keeps invading the silence with notifications sounds of dings from emails.]

Internal Sarah: Am I ever going to get a break from these damn emails?!

Sarah: You got to learn to be nice to these new instructors. They have never done this whole teaching thing before.

Internal Sarah: Still. I am not responsible for them! My supervisor is their manager. Shouldnâ??t she be responsible to know if students pass or not?! If I hear that annoying ding one more time from Outlook, then I will immediately throw this computer out of the window.

Sarah: Focus. I am almost done. Instructor Owens needs grades post-â?¦

[Ding from Sarahâ??s iPhone]

Internal Sarah: Another ding. Was that my phone?

Sarah: Yes. Now focus. Itâ??s probably one of my friends or husband wanting to chat.

Internal Sarah: It doesnâ??t hurt to glance right?

[Sarah aggressively picks up her iPhone and notices from the icon that it is an email.]

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: Itâ??s an email that says Adjunct Instructor Interview. What?!

Sarah: This canâ??t be rightâ?¦

Internal Sarah: Maybe itâ??s a mistake. I mean. Nothing to lose right? Read it really quick.

Email:

Subject: Adjunct Instructor Interview

From Dr. Jones:

Good morning,

I am reviewing your application for the instructor position and would like to schedule an interview with you. Are you available for a brief phone interview on Thursday, March 24 at 11:30 am?

Dr. Jones

Director of Columbus Community College

Sarah: This cannot be realâ?¦

Internal Sarah: Hey I need you to unfreeze and either reply to this email now or get back to work. Which is it?!

Sarah: I will reply to the email. But what do I say?! I used to work for Dr. Jones. She knows me rather well.

Internal Sarah: Since you are trying for a position, at least keep it professional.

Sarah: Yes, but you didnâ??t answer my question. What do I say stupid?!

Internal Sarah: Something like â??Hello Dr. Jones of course I am available. I will be at work but I will be sure to carve out time to talk with you. How long will this take?â?•

Sarah: No dummy! Maybe something short and sweet?

Internal Sarah: Okay what about this?

From Sarah:

Hello Dr. Jones,

Great to hear from you! Thursday, March 24 at 11:30 am works well for me. I look forward to hearing from you then.

Regards,

Sarah Wallace

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: Short and simple yet effective. Perfect!

Sarah: This canâ??t be real, can it? I got to the interview process!

Interlude

Waiting. It is a part of growth. Whether it is for a prize, admission, scholarship or a job, it is part of the process. Sometimes the process may take days, months, or even years to discover if the growth is a granted opportunity. Either way, growth is oftentimes an opportunity that is granted by another person. Sometimes they finally may or may not recognize each individual for their own character.

Waiting. Sometimes it can feel like an eternity. Sometimes, it may be accompanied by complete silence from the granter of growth. Anything can happen. Either an opportunity for advancement or remaining in the same spot. It is part of the process. It allows a small space for such a big storm to brew. This storm, flexible, containing all forms of negativity such as fear, self-doubt, anxiety, rejection, and so much more. But waiting is part of the process.

Scene III March 24, 2022, 11:20 am

[At Hampton Community College, Sarah notices on her desktop what time it is. It is officially minutes away until the interview]

Internal Sarah: I am not about to go do thisâ?¦ I cannot do this interviewâ?¦ What should I do?!

Sarah: I am about to go for this interview. Wish me luck!

Adrian: You got this! Let me know how it goes.

Internal Sarah: We are about to pass out. Do I really got this?! Okayâ?¦ Letâ??s do this thing!

[Sarah exits out of the administration offices and outside of Hampton Community College. It is lightly drizzling which is accompanied by a heavy humidity.]

Internal Sarah: Eww it is muggy outside. You got your car keys right? Good thing that this is just a phone call. Your hair is a disaster! This is still not happening!

[Sarah opens the door into her 2015 silver Toyota Corolla and throws herself into the car]

Internal Sarah: Okay now I can scream if I want.

Sarah: [Screams] I canâ??t believe this is happening.

[Sarah checks heart rate. 150 beats per minute].

Internal Sarah: Wow and you just walked to the car. Am I going to die? I didnâ??t think I would live to see me be successful.

[Sarahâ??s iPhone vibrates. Caller ID: Columbus Community College]

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: Oh noâ?¦

[Sarah quickly swipes right and answers the call]

Sarah: Hello?

[20 minutes later]

Dr. Jones: Thank you Sarah for scheduling time to talk with me today. I hope that you are still interested in the position and I didnâ??t scare you. Just a little FYI, you are considered the top candidate that is in mind right now for the position.

Internal Sarah: Did she really just say that?! Me?! Top candidate?!

Sarah: Wow! Well that is good to know. So I do have one question for you, what is the next step? Is there a teaching demonstration?

Internal Sarah: Yes! What about the teaching demonstration? I still have to do that.

Dr. Jones: No teaching demonstration! The next step is to select the desired candidate that we want to hire and inform HR to contact the candidate for the onboarding which the final decision will be made within about one to two weeks.

Internal Sarah: [Laughs] Iâ??m sorry, what? No teaching demonstration?! How would they know that I cannot teach?! This is a joke.

Sarah: Understandable. Thank you Dr. Jones for your time today. I look forward to hearing from you soon! Bye!

Dr. Jones: Talk soon! Bye! [hangs up]

Interlude

Indeed, social support is necessary. Whether it is friends, colleagues, family, supervisors or instructors, it is undoubtedly necessary. They provide teamwork and perspective when things go wrong. Some may even provide further opportunities for growth that should be pursued. It is exciting to tell others about my field of study and my research. The pressure is there, just silent. Does my effort count? Do they even care to ask me how I am doing? While unwell and ignored, I continue to grow and blossom.

Social support is certainly necessary. It helps with the process of growth to be more bearable. Even if the support is just from one person, it is essential. As a first generation student, it is only natural to lean on family for most support. Itâ??s a new experience in which none have done before. After being told â??youâ??re selfish, you canâ??t do this, you donâ??t count, thatâ??s not a real thingâ?• the hard work will tune their noise out. I am meant to grow.

Scene IV April 1, 2022, 8:30am

The AutoEthnographer

[Itâ??s Friday morning, the sun is just peeking through the clouds In front of the large body of water is Hampton Community College, which appears to be a long single story building with a dull color that is neutral and not welcoming. Sarah just parked.]

Internal Sarah: I donâ??t want to be here.

Sarah: I know it has been almost two weeks and I still nothing yet. Letâ??s focus on today. At least it is Friday!

Internal Sarah: Fine. This place is nothing but a sinking ship now without Kathleen. But, it is my responsibility to help the team now keep the ship from sinking.

[Sarah enters the building and finds her cubicle in the administrative office and sets her brown backpack down onto her gray desk while turning on the desktop computer.]

Internal Sarah: Alright. Letâ??s log into the computer and get started. My phone is buzzing. Who is it?

Sarah: Columbus Community Collegeâ?¦ Hello?

Dr. Jones: Good morning, may I please speak with Mrs. Wallace?

Internal Sarah: Oh shitâ?¦

Sarah: This is she.

Dr. Jones: Good morning Mrs. Wallace, how are you?

Internal Sarah: I donâ??t knowâ?¦ How am I? I have been struggling with answering that question these days. Depends on what you are about to tell me determines how I amâ?¦

Sarah: I am fine. How are you?

Dr. Jones: Marvelous. I am calling regarding your application status for the learning and development instructor position and would cordially like to offer you the position.

Internal Sarah: This is not realâ?¦What the hell?! No wayâ?¦ This could not have been that easyâ?¦ I am dreaming. Should I smack myself in order to wake up?

Sarah: [Tears streaming from her eyes] I gladly accept!

Dr. Jones: Wonderful! We are so excited to have you back! I will go ahead and let human resources know to start the onboarding process with you. I just wanted to give you the news myself before informing human resources.

Internal Sarah: This is not realâ?¦ I am dreamingâ?¦ I get to turn in my resignation letter. Finally.

Sarah: Thank you so much! I am ecstatic to get started!

Dr. Jones: I am so excited for you as well! Let me know if you need anything in the meantime.

Sarah: Thanks Dr. Jones, I will talk to you soon. Bye. [Hangs up]

Internal Sarah and Sarah: This still does not seem real. Am I dreaming?

The AutoEthnographer

Interlude

Many labels are attached to growth. Graduate student. Honors student. First generation college student. Adjunct professor. Assistant professor. Dean. Director. Tenure. All of these titles in which those that have had high levels of education often start from the very bottom. Rock bottom. This usually comes with being underpaid, undervalued, and overworked. While temporary, it builds skills and responsibilities, the label is deserved. Yet many experience a sense of doubt. A sense of feeling like a fake. A fraud. An imposter.

Along with labels, awards are also attached to growth. Some are ones that you can simply put on your resume while others hold monetary value. While all of which are great aspects to oneâ??s career, the storm rages inside of questioning if the award is deserved.

Scene V May 2, 2022, 8:45am

[The Columbus Community College Smithfield campus is very small and shares the same building with an old library. Oftentimes only a few staff members will populate the building with an occasional class taking place on campus. The Smithfield campus contains a single hallway that is accompanied by offices and classrooms on both sides. The hallway is dark, gloomy, holding old pictures of young adults ecstatic to be attending college occupy the walls. Sarah marches down to her classroom for the first day]

Internal Sarah: I am not about to go do thisâ?¦ This is not happeningâ?¦ Do I have everything? What if I forgot to print something out? Do we have the syllabus? What if the students take over my class? Or worseâ?¦ What if they fight? I canâ??t do thisâ?¦

Sarah. Okay, this is the classroom, letâ??s turn on some lights.

[Sarah enters the dark room and turns on the lights. The empty classroom, filled with table desks and chairs with one outdated computer for the instructor to use. The classroom is pale white and rectangular shaped, accompanied by a small dry erase board with a projector facing the pale white dry erase board.]

Sarah: OK, letâ??s get the computer on and going along with sorting out the documents I have.

[Sarah sorts out the documents by categorizing them from assignments, presentations, and handouts.]

Sarah: Alright, thatâ??s everything all in order. Even if I did forget something, how would they know? I set the flow of the course, right? Itâ??s my class right?

Internal Sarah: Itâ??s your class? This syllabus isnâ??t mine.

Sarah: My name is on the syllabus. Instructor: Sarah Wallace. You look fine. Your dark blue dress and black flats make you distinguished.

Internal Sarah: I think I hear footsteps. Are those students? Are they coming to my class? Isnâ??t there another class taking place on campus today?

[Sarah paces around the room anxiously awaiting for students to start coming into the classroom. One by one, students start to populate the room. Some students appear confused, while others appear nonchalant.]

Internal Sarah: These canâ??t be my students. Do I blend in with them? After all, I am in my early twenties and teachingâ?¦ Some of these students may be older than me! Help!

Sarah: Good morning! I am your instructor. My name is Sarah Wallace, please call me either instructor Wallace or Mrs. Wallace. I am excited that you all are here, and I hope you all find this class very useful. I am going to start by going over the syllabus.

[Sarah starts distributing the syllabus. One by one students start taking one and passing the remainder of the syllabuses down to the next student. Sarah begins to go through the syllabus.]

Sarah: My email is listed at the top first page of the syllabus which is my preferred method of contact right now. I do not have a phone number, I also do not have an office, so email is the best way to reach me. I do not anticipate this class to be very hard, there will be a new topic every week. Any questions?

Internal Sarah: Yeah, I got a question. What the heck are you doing?! You are being so casual with them. They are going to destroy you. You donâ??t got this.

[Sarah continues to explain and go over the syllabus and after about 15 minutes starts discussing the first weekâ??s course content.]

Sarah: Okay, so for week one, we are going to focus on problem solving.

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: Some arenâ??t paying attention to you. See that student over there? Theyâ??re on their phone. Youâ??re boring.

Sarah: What is problem solving?

Student 1: It is identifying a way to fix a certain situation or task.

Sarah: Correct, some other words that are associated with problem solving are overcoming, persistent, tenacicâ?¦

Internal Sarah: [laughs] what was that? See, now theyâ??re looking at you like youâ??re stupid.

Sarah: [pauses out of embarrassment] I am sorry guys, itâ??s a Monday and I cannot speak today. Tenacity.

Student 2: You good Mrs. Wallace! I have those days too!

Internal Sarah: I feel their blatant stares of disappointment piercing my soul.

Sarah: Thanks for understanding, letâ??s continue.

Internal Sarah: Well at least you apologized for being stupid.

[4 hours later the class finally ends. Students are aggressively shoving notebooks and binders into their backpacks. Sarah awaits for students to leave without asking questions at the end of class.]

Internal Sarah: Thank God we survived. Can we quit now?

Sarah: Computer off, students gone, make sure thereâ??s no paper on the floors, alright letâ??s go.

[Sarah exits the bland classroom that once was filled with students. As she shuts off the lights and exits out of the classroom]

Interlude

Sink or swim. I will be another one up for the test. Will I sink or will I swim? The others have sunk and conformed to the bottom in which they have made it comfortable for them to live with. They were not cut out for this. Am I cut out for this? The test will tell.

Sink or swim. Itâ??s what I am told. They expect a great portion of us to sink to the bottom. The depressing statistics reflect this. They encourage us to ask questions and to use the resources provided, but they know only a small amount will learn to swim. Even a smaller amount will come back on top. Will I be another? Or will I afloat and learn to swim? The test will tell.

Scene VI May 19, 2022, 12:50pm Columbus Community College Franklin Campus

[Sarah is in her shared office space and made room on the warm wood office desk that is accompanied by her laptop. The mountains of papers occupy the desk on one side of the L shaped desk. Sarah is planning for the final two weeks of the first cohort.]

The AutoEthnographer

Internal Sarah: I still canâ??t believe we are teaching. This is fun!

[Dr. Jones knocks and enters the shared office]

Dr. Jones: Hi Sarah! Didnâ??t think you would be here today.

Internal Sarah: Oh crap youâ??re in trouble.

Sarah: Sorry I just had a few worksheets here that I needed to grab for my upcoming classes.

Dr. Jones: No worries! How is the class going?

Internal Sarah: Do I tell her the truth or do I play it off? She used to be an instructor herself. Maybe she could give some pointers to help. Sheâ??s still going to fire you.

Sarah: I think it is going okay. Students tell me that the class has really helped them. I just donâ??t feel like I am doing everything right.

The Autoethnographer

Dr. Jones: [lightly chuckles] Girl! Itâ??s okay. The beauty of teaching is that there is no wrong nor right way of doing it. Especially with this class since the program is brand new. You are the first to teach this class.

Internal Sarah: Of course I am the first one to be the test dummy, I was the first one to have my last position at Hampton Community College as well! When will I ever learn?

Sarah: That is true, I have just been dealing with a moderate case of imposter syndrome I think. It makes me doubt myself a lot.

Dr. Jones: [lightly chuckles] Girlfriend welcome to the world of academia! It is so common for people to experience imposter syndrome. I got it.

Sarah: What?! You do? I wouldâ??ve never guessed.

Internal Sarah: There is no way. Sheâ??s lying. Sheâ??s just saying this just to make me feel better.

Dr. Jones [nods] Yep. I still suffer with it on occasions to this very day, especially with me taking on this director position. I keep telling myself if this does not work out I can always go back to what I was doing before and I will be okay. Even when I was teaching, I remember staying up until early morning planning for my classes. Itâ??s normal.

Sarah: [exhales deeply] Wow! So this isnâ??t just me. I just feel like I could be doing so much more. How did you manage to overcome imposter syndrome? Did it go away?

Internal Sarah: Girl. It isnâ??t ever going away. But does it?

Dr. Jones: It doesnâ??t go away. There will be times when it will feel unbearable. You donâ??t let it overwhelm you, you change it into what you can do right in front of you and go from there. Itâ??s just a matter of turning it from negative to positive and working with it. I will tell you this, you were picked to be the instructor because of your talents and your abilities to do the job. You are indeed a leader, and many look up to you whether you realize it or not.

I know I have told you a few times before, if you need to come into my office and just rant, come. My door is always open. If the class is stressing you out, come tell me about it and maybe I can offer a solution. Donâ??t forget I used to teach, and I used to teach future teachers. So I am fully aware of what you are going through. I am here if you need me.

Sarah: I greatly appreciate it Dr. Jones!

Dr. Jones: [glancing down at her sleek modern golden watch] Well I got to run! I am late to my 1 oâ??clock meeting. If you need me I am here!

Sarah: Thank you again Dr. Jones!

[Dr. Jones exits and Sarah continues to work]

Interlude

Imposter syndrome. It strikes at moments when not expected, yet it does not discriminate. It is the dreadful side effect of high achievement that is often popular among the natives of high achievers, yet kept secret and makes people feel like a fraud, a scam, a failure. You can only know it when you feel. Itâ??s just in my head, right?

Imposter syndrome. Some may be able to relate. Others think itâ??s just in the mind. The mind is a great and powerful thing, yet a dangerous weapon. Questions provided by others invite either acknowledgement or challenges of what is known. They may not know specifically what to ask. Do they know what I have contributed? Do they even know what it is I study? What am I studying? Is this wasting my time? Itâ??s just in my head, right?

Scene VII June 2, 2022, 2:00pm Columbus Community College

[At the empty Smithfield campus, an adjunct office is one of many of the offices that populates the single dark hallway at Columbus Community College. The adjunct office used to be the heart of where most of the collegeâ??s faculty can be found while they are not in class teaching. In the dark adjunct office, there are items scattered around from previous college recruiting events, PPE supplies from COVID-19, old assignments graded from years ago, an overwhelmingly full bookshelf of expired food for the food pantry, and kitchen appliances unused by the staff of the college. Sarah is working on catching up on grading on the little counter space that is not occupied by miscellaneous items that had turned the office into a closet over the years. Sarah is finishing grading papers from her last class. A gentle knock on the opened door, Dr. Atkins stands in the doorway awaiting to be greeted by Sarah]

Internal Sarah: Who is that? I thought it was just me and an advisor here today.

[Sarah turns around and sees Dr. Atkins]

Dr. Atkins: Hi there! Iâ??m Dr. Atkins. Just thought I would come by and introduce myself.

Sarah: Iâ??m Sarah Wallace, Iâ??m kind of new here. Iâ??m an adjunct instructor for the workforce. I used to work here before I got this position.

Dr. Atkins: Oh okay cool! We greatly value our instructors no matter what side of the college you teach. So tell me a little more about yourself.

Internal Sarah: Sheâ??s lying. Just wait till she finds out that youâ??re a fraud. A young fraud that is crafty at that. Who are you anyways?

Sarah: Well, like I said I used to work here. I started in admissions part time and then transferred over to Hampton Community College since there was a better opportunity there. Then eventually I found this position and applied to it not really trying to get it, but more so for practice for a teaching demonstration and ended up where I am now. I enjoy teaching. After I finish my masterâ??s degree in the fall I hope to be teaching a little more in my field.

Dr. Atkins: Oh I see! So what are you studying exactly?

Internal Sarah: I am going for my masters in fraudulence.

Sarah: I am going for my masters in sociology.

The Autoethnographer

Dr. Atkins: Sociology! Very cool! I teach biology, am all about the sciences and actually started off teaching part time and then eventually moved into full time faculty.

Sarah: That would be a dream!

Dr. Atkins: Well let me tell you what I got up my sleeve as the new director. So as I am sure you are aware, the classrooms are mostly empty, minus yours that takes place however often. Well, pre-COVID-19, this place was booming with students, faculty, and classes. Almost all full time faculty are housed in the Franklin campus, because that is where the main campus is, therefore, most of the students are there. Faculty want their seats to be full. Now letâ??s face it the faculty that already teach in Franklin are not as likely to have a class in Smithfield. That is too much. So with us trying to build from the ground up, we need more instructors even with the small class sizes. How would you feel about teaching a sociology class once you are finished?

Internal Sarah: This isnâ??t real. This is a dreamâ?¦

Sarah: [looking flabbergasted] I would love to!

Dr. Atkins: Are you okay? You seem like something is wrong.

Internal Sarah: This is where you expose yourself. Go!

Sarah: Iâ??m good, I just canâ??t believe all this to be happening so fast which does not appear to be real. I get this way sometimes while teaching too. Itâ??s all exciting because I know I love to teach, itâ??s what I want to do with my life. I just tend to get caught up in the panic and anxiety of all the excitement which I think is imposter syndrome.

Dr. Atkins: [exhales in relief] Oh I completely understand where you are coming from! I just wanted to make sure I wasnâ??t scaring you. It is completely normal to feel this way when you are first starting out. I had also started my teaching career here at the college about eight years ago and felt exactly what you are feeling now. Itâ??s just all new with the new atmosphere, learning to teach, creating the

course, picking out the books, all of it! Believe me, I know it all too well!

Sarah: I am just thankful that my first cohort is not that big. Itâ??s rather small which works for me starting out. I just feel like my first cohort is a dumpster fire. Granted, I had just a few days to put together this class and make it work. My students are awesome for sticking it out with me while I figure out what works and what doesnâ??t.

Dr. Atkins: And it is normal for the first class of students to be a complete disaster! Mine was the same way. It was like after teaching I would feel a sense of relief after feeling so much anxiety and pressure right before class. Let me tell you something, you determine what works and what doesnâ??t. This includes what assignments you include, the books, the presentations, the tests, quizzes, all of it. From what it sounds like, you care a lot. If you didnâ??t, you would not be worried this much. You are doing a great job! I promise things get better as time goes on, trust me, I am speaking from experience. Just stick it out.

Sarah: Thank you so much for that, Dr. Atkins! Youâ??re exactly right that itâ??s new and intimidating. It just takes time to adapt and learn what works. Iâ??ve started creating my own course material even though Iâ??ve been provided with things to use, I just donâ??t see it working for my students and for me.

The AutoEthnographer

Dr. Atkins: Sure anytime! Again, you will be fine. Now, if I were you, I would send your resume, cover letter, curriculum vitae, and transcripts to Dr. Jackson so he has you in mind to teach sociology in the spring after you graduate in the upcoming fall. Classes are usually published around September, so that gives you ample time to update everything that you need to send to him.

Internal Sarah: And into the trash can my resume would go!

Sarah: Looks like I need to also update my curriculum vitae along with my resume.

Dr. Atkins: I like how you think! And I am not sure if I would be of much help with your program you are teaching currently, but if you need help with building up the class, feel free to use me as a resource.

Sarah: I may take you up on that! Thank you!

Dr. Atkins: Of course! Iâ??ll be sure to be on the lookout for your name if Dr. Jackson brings up your information in order to get you teaching sociology. It was great talking to you, Sarah. I hope you have a great rest of your day.

[Dr. Atkins walks away from outside of the adjunct office and Sarah continues to grade]

Credits

A Photo of a man falling boxes by SHVETS Production for Pexels

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