

# Code-Switching or Connecting? Social Settings and Black Women's Sense of Belonging

Yaya Corley, Department of Psychology  
The College Of Wooster  
Advisor: Dan Scheibe

## Introduction

- Black women at PWIs may face microaggressions and pressure to conform, increasing code-switching and affecting their sense of belonging and anxiety.
- In contrast, HBCUs may provide more supportive, culturally affirming environments that promote authenticity, connection, and better psychological outcomes.

## Hypothesis

- Higher anxiety → lower belonging & the higher pressure to code switch
- PWIs → higher anxiety, lower belonging, the higher pressure to code switch
  - HBCUs → higher belonging, less pressure to code switch

## Methods

### Participants

- 180 Black Women
- This study was conducted online via CloudResearch and Sonar Systems

### Design

- Survey-based, between-groups design
- Self-report measure

	1 = Not at all true	2 = A little true	3 = Somewhat true	4 = Mostly true	5 = Completely true
I feel like a real part of my college/university.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel accepted by my peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often feel ignored or overlooked.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
I feel pressured to change the way I speak in academic settings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I change my speech to avoid negative stereotypes in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

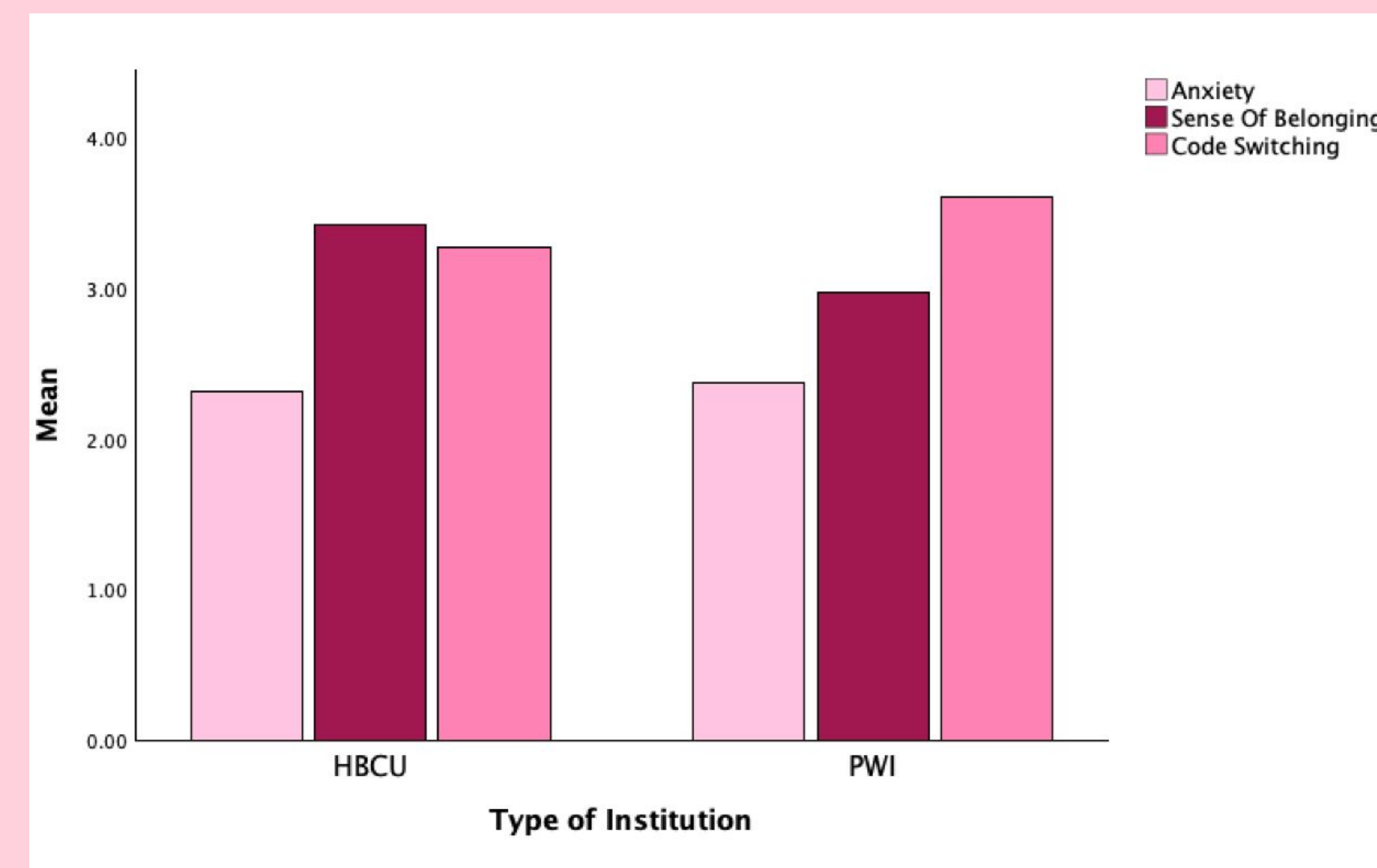
HBCU = 30  
PWI = 150

## Results

Correlation Matrix

Variable	n	M (SD)	1	2	3
1. Anxiety	180	2.36(.79)	-		
2. Sense of Belonging	180	3.04(.66)	.03	-	
3. Code Switching	180	3.55 (.73)	.37*	-.27*	-

\* =  $p < .001$



- Anxiety & Code-Switching: Positively related (higher anxiety → more code switching)
- Belonging & Code-Switching: Negatively related (lower belonging → more code switching)
  - Anxiety & Belonging: Not significantly related
- Institutional Differences:
  - HBCU students → higher sense of belonging
  - PWI students → greater pressure to code switch



## Conclusion

- Institutional context shapes Black women's experiences in higher education.
- PWIs are linked to lower belonging and more pressure to code-switch, increasing strain.
- HBCUs offer more affirming environments that support authenticity and connection.

## Future Directions

- Use larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal methods.
  - Consider intersecting identities and campus factors to improve belonging.

## References and Suggested Readings

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