Social Class Concealment: A Daily Diary Study of College Students who are Low-Income

By

Mun Yuk Chin

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Mindi N. Thompson, Associate Professor, Counseling Psychology (Chair)
Stephanie L. Budge, Associate Professor, Counseling Psychology
William T. Hoyt, Professor, Counseling Psychology
Matthew T. Hora, Assistant Professor, Education Leadership and Policy Analysis & Liberal Arts and Applied Studies
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婆婆, 公公, 外婆, and 外公, this work is dedicated to you.
Abstract

Students who are low-income (SLI) face challenges that impact their academic and social functioning. Given that classism is prevalent in college, one source of stress for SLI is their routine management of their social class identity as a concealable stigma. Using a daily diary design, this study examined the situational and behavioral characteristics of social class concealment among SLI, and tested the within-person relationships between daily concealment effort and negative mood. One hundred and four undergraduate students who self-identified as low-income completed a daily morning and evening survey for 14 days to track their negative mood and social class concealment experiences. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using the fundamental qualitative description method and multilevel regression respectively. Results indicated that participants concealed their identities in situations that amplified their social class stigma (e.g., social pressures, financial concerns) amidst different audience members and in various locations. Concealment behaviors included disguising, impression enhancement, and distraction strategies. Contrary to the hypotheses, morning negative mood did not predict concealment effort for the day; concealment effort was not linked to worse evening negative mood after controlling for morning mood. Implications for higher education, counseling, and future research are discussed.
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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Stigma, defined as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963, p. 3), has received scholarly attention for its propensity to contribute to negative health and social implications (e.g., Cain, 1991; Ragins, 2008). In his influential work, Goffman posited that individuals who bear attributes that are rendered socially unacceptable are, by extension, perceived to be damaged or inept. To avoid social rejection and embarrassment, people may actively conceal their stigmas in order to prevent their personal information from being known by others (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Meyer, 2003). These behaviors, commonly known as “passing,” are intended to disassociate individuals from possessing markers of stigma.

Research has demonstrated the deleterious associations of stigma concealment with individuals’ social (e.g., Uysal, Lin, & Bush, 2012), psychological (e.g., Potocznia, Aldrea, & DeBlaere, 2007), and physical health (e.g., Larson & Chastain, 1990). A meta-analysis of 137 studies on self-concealment motivation reported medium effect sizes for concealment’s positive relationship with secret-keeping and negative relationships with depression, anxiety, and perceived social support (Larson, Chastain, Hoyt, & Ayzenberg, 2015). For example, research on racial passing indicated the pervasive feelings of shame, frustration, and social exclusion felt by light-skin African-Americans who were perceived as White, despite reaping privileges from being seen as White (Cunningham, 1997; Thompson-Miller, Feagin, & Picca, 2015; Walden-Kaufman, 1999). Additionally, research focused on workplace identity management posits that employees’ emotional toll of maintaining secrecy around their minority sexual identities may counter their protection from being discriminated against by being closeted (Fassinger, 1995;
Griffin, 1992). Taken together, these results suggest that concealment of stigma, despite its protective and self-preserving intentions, may lead to undesirable outcomes.

**Social Class Identity as a Concealable Stigma**

Despite growing research on stigma concealment, few studies have explicitly examined the concealment of social class identity. Contrary to traditional sociological definitions, this study adopts a psychological conceptualization of social class. One’s class identity is defined as their “rich system of cultural expectations, manners, customs, and social norms” grounded in their economic position, which has psychological implications (Kraus & Stephens, 2012, p. 649). Embedded within one’s class identity is their perceived social status, which includes one’s perceived level of prestige, power, and access or control to material resources (Fouad & Brown, 2000; Liu et al., 2004). The differential status identity model further suggests that individuals’ perceived social status is dynamically and concomitantly influenced by their race and social class in relation to others; that is, different social contexts give rise to different psychological experiences of social status (Fouad & Brown, 2000; Thompson & Subich, 2007). In short, one’s social class extends beyond their objective socioeconomic status (SES), and together with other salient identities (e.g., race) contributes to the individual’s perceived standing in society (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

Because of its invisibility, a person’s social class identity can be conceptualized as a concealable stigma. In a qualitative study of low-income, first-generation, and working class (LIFGWC) college students in the United States (U.S.), Warnock and Hurst (2016) noted that one of the significant barriers to gathering, recruiting members, and establishing a LIFGWC student organization was due to the inconspicuous yet stigmatized nature of social class. Specifically, students found it challenging to determine whether others were rich or poor and had
difficulty feeling proud of their class backgrounds. Participants also spoke about their misattributed class identity based on racial stereotypes; for example, White working-class students were consistently assumed to be middle- or upper-class.

Social class’ invisibility also is amplified in the U.S. given its pervasive myth of meritocracy and classlessness. This is exemplified by the “American Dream” narrative, or the belief that immigrants who come ashore on this land of opportunity will only be limited by their own levels of ambition and dedication (e.g., Reeves, 2017). According to the myth of meritocracy, individuals who are poor or working-class are perceived to be wholly responsible for their circumstances; in other words, they are poor because they did not work hard enough or were not talented enough to be successful. This view is harmful because it absolves the systemic inequalities that perpetuate poverty and class differences (e.g., Reutter et al., 2009).

Low-Income College Students

Within higher education, students who are low-income (SLI) face increased barriers to academic persistence and graduation due to a confluence of systemic and individual factors (Corrigan, 2003; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). For example, students of low SES—as measured by family income, parental education and/or occupation—have been found to study less, work more, participate less in social activities, feel less integrated into college, and obtain lower grades compared to those with higher SES (Rubin, 2012; Walpole, 2003). Student SES also is negatively correlated with academic adjustment (Ostrove & Long, 2007) and degree completion (Astin, 1993).

First-generation college students (FGCS) are overrepresented among SLI. In a survey of more than 140,000 students in public universities in the U.S., approximately 70% of SLI identified as FGCS and 70% of the FGCS college students reported annual family incomes of
less than $35,000 (Soria et al., 2013). Similarly, FGCS experience limited social networks and participation, greater demands to work in addition to engaging in student events, lower social integration, and lower levels of college preparedness (Barry, Hudley, Kelly, & Cho, 2009; Reid & Moore, 2008; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Taken together, these challenges make college a particularly stressful life event for SLI, many of whom identify as FGCS (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009; Saldaña, 1994).

**Daily Social Class Concealment Experiences**

One understudied source of stress for SLI is their management of their social class identity. Because (low) social class identity is a form of concealable stigma, hiding class-related attributes has been linked with negative consequences. For example, results from a daily diary study of undergraduates with visible and invisible stigmas showed that those with invisible stigmas (some of whom reported low family incomes as their invisible stigma) endorsed more negative affect and lower self-esteem than their counterparts with visible stigmas (Frable, Platt, & Hoey, 1998).

Little is known about the prevalence and nature of people’s everyday experiences of class concealment. To date, no study has explicitly identified the range of daily strategies used by undergraduate students to conceal their class identities, the contexts in which concealment occurs, and their associations with negative mood. This study used daily diary design to investigate the process of social class concealment based on the cognitive-affective-behavioral model of stigma concealment (Pachankis, 2007).

**The Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral Model**

Pachankis’ (2007) cognitive-affective-behavioral (CAB) model is an integrative framework that delineates the cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes that occur when an
individual conceals their stigma in a given situation. First, the individual attends to their situational cues to assess the salience of their stigma as well as the potential threats or effects of being discovered. Their assessment bears cognitive (e.g., vigilance, suspiciousness) and affective (e.g., anxiety, depression) implications, which are bidirectional. Next, these cognitive and affective implications are expected to prompt one’s concealment behaviors (e.g., secret-keeping, social avoidance). However, the stress of hiding or concealing one’s stigma reinforces and potentially exacerbates one’s psychological distress, which may manifest as more severe affective implications.

Together, these cognitive, affective, and behavioral implications are posited to reinforce the individual’s low self-evaluation (e.g., self-efficacy, negative self-view, identity ambivalence). On the contrary, individuals who disclose may have the opportunity to receive positive feedback about their stigmatized identity, which can attenuate their negative self-evaluation. In other words, the CAB model suggests that different contributors (i.e., situational characteristics, behavioral characteristics, and affect) are involved in the psychological process of stigma concealment.

**Situational Characteristics that relate to Daily Class Concealment**

The CAB model posits that situational cues are important because they contribute to individuals’ decision-making processes around concealing their social class identity (Pachankis, 2007). More specifically, characteristics of the interaction partners, contexts, and locations influence people’s perceived salience of their stigma and their concerns of being outed. With respect to class concealment, research has demonstrated that adults and college students hide their class backgrounds and financial statuses from a variety of groups of individuals and in different situations such as job interviews and casual social interactions (Aries & Seider, 2005;
Granfield, 1991). However, there has been no examination of the contextual characteristics that precede low-income students’ class concealment on a routine basis. Thus, the study’s first aim was to qualitatively describe the interaction partner characteristics, locations, and precipitating events that surround these students’ daily class concealment experiences.

**Interaction partner characteristics.** Because SLI tend to interact with various groups of people during college, it is important to consider the impact of the interaction partner(s) when considering individuals’ decisions to conceal or disclose. Research on low-income and working-class individuals’ navigation of class-related stigma has revealed that stigma emanates from a variety of sources. For example, adults experiencing poverty reported encountering messages from family members, friends, strangers, neighbors, and service personnel that amplified their SES-related stigma (Reutter et al., 2009). Within higher education, working-class students have been demonstrated to conceal their class backgrounds from roommates, peers, instructors, and prospective employers (Granfield, 1991; Lehmann, 2009).

To further understand when an individual may be more likely to conceal one’s social class, it is important to consider within group differences in the interaction partner’s social status as perceived by the individual. Individuals’ perceived social status relative to others is embedded in their psychological awareness of their social class identity (Liu et al., 2004; Wright, 1997). As such, individuals’ perceptions of their interaction partner’s social status may include an assessment of the former’s economic resources (e.g., income), prestige (e.g., occupation), and power (e.g., political participation or control: Thompson & Subich, 2007; Fouad & Brown, 2000). According to the CAB model, when participants perceive their interaction partners as having higher social statuses they may experience more class-based stigma (Pachankis, 2007). Previous research appears to support this assertion. For example, working class students in elite
institutions described their pressure to hide or conceal their low-class backgrounds to avoid being seen as deviant (Granfield, 1991) or inferior (Aries & Seider, 2005). Conversely, low-income and working-class students have reported less pressure to conceal their social class information from peers with similar backgrounds. Specifically, students reported greater willingness to share more openly with peers whom they perceived to be from similar class backgrounds (Warnock & Hurst, 2016).

**Context and location of events.** Contextual characteristics in the form of preceding events and settings (or locations) also contribute to people’s social class concealment processes. For example, adults living in poverty reported concealing their SES to avoid being judged further by others whom they overhead making classist comments that attributed poverty to lack of effort (Reutter et al., 2009). Similarly, low-income college students were more likely to conceal following conversations that highlighted their peers’ middle- or upper-class experiences (e.g., international travel) because the SLI reportedly felt inferior about their class backgrounds (Aries & Seider, 2005). Further, a group of law students reported being motivated to mask their working-class backgrounds during job interviews and instead convey themselves as (minimally) middle-class to avoid being discriminated against by potential employers (Granfield, 1991). With respect to physical location, class concealment among college students has been documented to occur in the classrooms, dormitories, and restaurants (Aries & Seider, 2005; Collier & Morgan, 2008).

Taken together, prior research indicates that low-income college students may be more motivated to conceal under particular circumstances. Yet, no information regarding the partner characteristics, context, and locations in which SLI routinely conceal their social class identities exists. This study sought to better understand the “audience members” from whom students
conceal as well as the specific contexts and locations that prompt concealment. In particular, this study explored the situational characteristics of low-income students’ daily concealment experiences in order to address the following research question:

*RQ1:* When, where, and with whom do SLI conceal their social class identities?

**Behavioral Characteristics that relate to Daily Class Concealment**

According to the CAB framework, stigma concealment behaviors can take the form of impression management and social avoidance (Pachankis, 2007). Because individuals are motivated to present an unstained impression by hiding or eliminating information (Cain, 1991; Jackson & Mohr, 2016), they may keep secrets, lie, alter their appearances, or avoid social contact (Goffman, 1963; Smart & Wegner, 1999). Previous research has identified various mechanisms utilized to hide or manage their social class backgrounds (Granfield, 1991; Reutter et al., 2009). For example, adults who are poor reported hiding their financial and housing struggles via social avoidance, self-omission, nondisclosure, and the intentional use of material goods to signal wealth (Reutter et al., 2009).

These behavioral strategies may extend to SLI who are concealing their class-related information. Among working-class law students in an elite school, Granfield (1991) noted that the students mimicked their wealthier peers’ speech patterns and behaviors to avoid being perceived as working-class. FGCS indicated being unlikely to attend office hours to discuss their difficulties understanding academic materials with faculty (e.g., jargon, assignments) because they felt that faculty expected them to “already know it” (Collier & Morgan, 2008, p. 438). Additionally, a study of White students who are low-income found that participants who attended an elite liberal arts college altered their social behaviors to avoid disclosing their class backgrounds and limited resources; for example, some avoided sharing details about their
parents’ blue-collar jobs and others refrained from ordering food at restaurants (Aries & Seider, 2005).

To date, no study has explicitly assessed the everyday strategies used by SLI to conceal their class identities and backgrounds. Thus, the study’s second aim was to extend our knowledge of the concealment practices used by SLI. We sought to categorize and describe these routine strategies using participants’ narratives of how they hid or managed their class-related information. This information was used to address the following research question:

*RQ2:* How do SLI conceal their social class identities on a routine basis?

**Affective Characteristics that relate to Daily Class Concealment**

Finally, the CAB model asserts that negative affect such as anxiety, depression, and anger amplify individuals’ concealment behaviors. At the same time, concealment may intensify negative affect because it can be psychologically distressing (Pachankis, 2007). Stigma concealment has been shown to relate to increased psychological symptoms and distress among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) adults (Cohen et al., 2016; Friedlander et al., 2012; Major & Gramzow, 1999; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). For example, among LGBQ adults, greater concealment of sexual identities has been linked with increased mental health symptoms such as depression and anxiety (Friedlander et al., 2012; Leleux-Labarge, Hatton, Goodnight, & Masuda, 2015; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009; Scrimshaw, Siegel, Downing, & Parsons, 2013; Sedlovskaya et al., 2013). Although the relationships between stigma concealment and psychological distress has not yet been tested among low-income college students, previous research has shown that college students of lower SES are at higher risks of experiencing psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression (Cuellar & Roberts, 1997; Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007; Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009; Weitzman, 2004).
It is important to note that past findings within LGBQ samples showing the concealment-distress link have been challenged because of their reliance upon cross-sectional designs that fail to account for the reciprocal relationship between concealment and affect (e.g., Beals, Peplau, & Gable, 2009). Specifically, the CAB model postulates that individuals experiencing negative affect may be motivated to conceal instead of disclose their identity (Pachankis, 2007). Negative moods, which are temporary episodes of negative affect or feeling, are influenced by psychological and environmental contexts (Clark & Watson, 1988; Watson & Vaidya, 2003). When persistent, negative moods can cause distress and manifest as symptoms of psychological disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Watson & Vaidya, 2003). Thus, negative mood can function both as a predictor and an outcome of concealment. As such, the study’s third aim was to delineate the relationship between negative mood and perceived concealment effort among SLI. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

\[ H1: \] Heightened morning negative mood will be associated with increased concealment effort later that day.

\[ H2: \] Concealment effort during the day will be associated with worse evening negative mood after controlling for morning negative mood.

**The Daily Diary Methodology**

To examine the daily processes of social class concealment among SLI, a daily diary design was employed. Diary designs seek to capture phenomena of interest by having participants repeatedly report their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and contexts close to when these events occur (Iida, Shrout, Laurenceau, & Bolger, 2012). They yield both quantitative and qualitative data and share similar features with other intensive sampling methods (e.g., experience sampling, ambulatory assessment) that examine participants’ experiences and
behaviors *in vivo* or *in situ*, or within their contexts or as they are lived (Fisher & To, 2012; Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007). As such, the daily diary design has several advantages over cross-sectional designs when studying phenomena such as daily social class concealment.

First, the daily diary method provides researchers access to individual experiences of class concealment that are elusive and/or dynamic in nature (Zirkel, Garcia, & Murphy, 2015). Students’ class concealment strategies and associated situational factors may be tracked at a more granular level using daily diary methods as compared to using cross-sectional designs or retrospective interviews. Second, this method minimizes recall concerns that may affect the accuracy of participants’ reports of events when aggregated over longer periods of time (Fisher & To, 2012). Thus, it provides better estimates of the prevalence of class concealment events in students’ lives. Third, the design’s repeated measurements yield nested data that can be analyzed for patterns that occur within a person as well as changes that occur between-persons and/or– groups (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Fisher & To, 2012; Zirkel et al., 2015). This longitudinal feature allows researchers to identify the temporal progression of events. As such, it will enable us to disentangle the reciprocal relationship between negative mood and class concealment (Gunthert & Wenze, 2012).

Previous research on stigma has leveraged daily diary designs to describe the nature, prevalence, and affective implications of commonplace experiences of prejudice, including racism (e.g., Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Fitzgerald, 2003), heterosexism (e.g., Swim, Pearson, & Johnston, 2007), and gender-based stereotypes (e.g., Brinkman & Rickard, 2009). With respect to stigma concealment, research on sexual identity management has employed experience sampling designs to examine its characteristics and antecedents (e.g., King, Mohr, Peddie, Jones,
& Kendra, 2017) as well as the consequences (e.g., Beals et al., 2009) of concealment or disclosure. Thus, the daily diary method was well-suited to describe the behaviors and contexts of everyday social class concealment, as well as to examine the negative mood associated with these experiences.

**Summary**

The study used a daily diary design to explicate low-income students’ daily class concealment experiences and its links with negative mood. It sought to clarify an understudied area of low-income students’ college-related experiences, which may allow us to uncover another stressor that contributes to their social and academic struggles. Empirically, findings from this study contributed to current psychological literature on social class and extended the application of stigma concealment theory to social class identity. Clinically, these results were used to enhance higher education and counseling professionals’ interventions with students who are low-income.
CHAPTER II
The Pursuit of Social Mobility

The conventional belief that higher education fuels social mobility assumes an education-based meritocracy (Goldthorpe, 2003). This theory postulates that a person’s educational attainment weakens their association with their family’s SES and strengthens their connection with their class of destination (Bell, 1973; Goldthorpe, 2003). Equipped with new skills and knowledge, college graduates gain upward mobility via employment, regardless of their families’ economic positions. In other words, higher education functions as a “meritocratic filter between the economic position of the families in which children grow up and those children’s economic position as adults” (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006, p. 129). Indeed, research has demonstrated that a college degree in the U.S. confers many benefits onto adults, including doubling their earning potential (Day & Newburger, 2002), boosting actual earnings (e.g., Ashenfelter, Harmon, & Oosterbeck, 2000), and increasing access to different careers (e.g., Trusty & Niles, 2004). For example, among young adults aged 25-34 who were employed full-time, those with a bachelor’s degree had higher mean earnings ($48,500) as compared to those with a high school diploma ($30,000; Kena et al., 2015).

On the other hand, research also has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of education in moderating class disparities among students (e.g., Walpole, 2003). Occupational trends assessed between the 1970s and the 1990s in the U.S. and the United Kingdom indicated that over time, college graduates were less likely to “class jump” in their occupational choices despite access to tertiary education (Goldthorpe, 2003). Other scholars have noted the role of the U.S. higher education system in perpetuating and intensifying differences in people’s social class via various mechanisms spanning from college preparation to graduation (e.g., Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012).
Although college graduation rates for students born between the early 1960s and the late 1970s increased, the rates were stratified based on students’ family income (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Using national data, the authors found that students with family incomes in the top quartile experienced an 18 percentage point increase in graduation rates whereas students with family incomes in the lowest quartile increased by only four percentage points. Also, institutional enrollment rates differed by family income. Approximately 70% of students who were enrolled in highly selective colleges reported family incomes in the top quartile ($100,000 and above) whereas 5% of students enrolled in such colleges reported family incomes in the bottom quartile ($25,000 and below; Carnevale & Strohl, 2010). Enrollment rates in community colleges are skewed in the opposite direction with students from lower income backgrounds overrepresented as compared to students from middle- and upper-income backgrounds (Carnevale & Strohl, 2010).

Taken together, evidence suggests that the higher education system in the U.S. fails to confer benefits in a manner that equalizes students’ economic backgrounds. In particular, students of low social status face significant challenges in their academic trajectories (e.g., Astin, 1993; Choy, 2001; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

**College Experiences among Students from Low Social Status Backgrounds**

Research on students of low social status in higher education have typically focused on first-generation, low-income, low SES, and working-class students (Mamiseishvilli & Deggs, 2013; Pascarella et al., 2004; Soria et al., 2013; Walpole, 2003). FGCS are those whose parents have not attended college or obtained degrees (Terenzini et al., 1994; Thompson & Phillips, 2013) and are overrepresented among SLI (Horn & Nunez, 2000). In a large national survey from 2002, FGCS reported lower household income levels—approximately 30% reported family
incomes of less than $20,000 and 50% reported incomes between $20,000 and $50,000 (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). Black and Hispanic students also are overrepresented among SLI (Engle & Tinto, 2008), due to their disproportionately higher rates of living in poverty as children as compared to White students (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

With respect to degree completion, students from low social status backgrounds have low retention and graduation rates. Using a national dataset, it was noted that a significantly lower proportion of low-income and FGCS (11%) earned a bachelor’s degree after six years as compared to their more resourced peers (55%; Engle & Tinto, 2008). In another study, approximately 75% of FGCS who enrolled in four-year colleges did not earn a degree after four years (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011). Using a longitudinal national dataset of 18,000 students in two-year institutions, those who identified as low-income (as measured by family or personal income of less than $32,000 or $12,000 respectively) generally took longer than three years to complete their programs (Mamiseishvili & Deggs, 2013). Other scholars have highlighted that low SES students (as defined by their parents’ income, education, and occupation) earned less than those with high SES nine years post college enrollment (Walpole, 2003).

Previous research also has shown differences in students’ college experiences based on social class (Ostrove, 2003; Pascarella et al., 2004; Rubin, 2012). Using a national dataset that followed more than 3,000 students in four-year colleges for three years, Pascarella et al. (2004) found that despite controlling for pre-entry (e.g., cognitive ability) and demographic (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and parental income) factors, FGCS took fewer course credits, worked more, were less involved in extracurricular activities, interacted less with peers outside of their classrooms, and achieved lower grades as compared to their continuing generation peers. These results were
consistent with previous findings (e.g., Choy, 2001; Dougherty, 1994, Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Similar trends were found for low SES students whose parents earned less income, were less educated, and had lower occupational prestige (Walpole, 2003). Based on a national survey of more than 12,000 students across 200 four-year colleges, Walpole (2003) found that students with low SES spent less time studying, worked more, and had lower GPAs than their peers.

SLI face significant challenges to adjusting socially and academically to college (Astin, 1993; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Soria et al., 2013). Using detailed case studies of working class women who attended a prestigious liberal arts college, Wentworth and Peterson (2001) highlighted a common theme of intimidation and lack of belongingness within their institution. In another qualitative study of 25 middle-aged adults who identified as working-class college students, Karp (1986) highlighted that these participants were “strangers in a strange land” (p. 25) when they attended college because they felt frequently felt lost, confused, inferior, and marginalized because of their class backgrounds.

Findings from quantitative studies corroborate these results. In a meta-analysis of 35 studies, Rubin et al. (2012) found a small but significant positive relationship between students’ SES and their social and academic adjustment in college. That is, the lower the students’ SES, the less frequent and the poorer the quality of their interactions with faculty and peers. These findings persisted when controlling for the student’s gender and year of study. In another quantitative study of approximately 300 students in a liberal arts college, social class (as measured as a composite index of subjective and objective indicators) was positively correlated with perceived belongingness and social adjustment (Ostrove & Long, 2007). Higher social class related to a greater sense of belonging and higher reports of feeling socially adjusted. Among
150,000 students in large U.S. public universities, Soria et al. (2013) found that working class students perceived college to be less welcoming (small effect size), felt a lower level of belongingness (moderate effect size), and experienced poorer mental health (moderate effect size) as compared to their middle-upper class peers.

Taken together, research has shown that students’ social class backgrounds are linked with their academic and social functioning in college (e.g., Ostrove & Long, 2007; Walpole, 2003). Thus, it is important to consider how students’ social class identities may influence their college experiences. Given the disparities that college SLI face as a result of their social status, it is especially relevant to examine how social class contributes to their experiences.

**Social Class Identity**

In the U.S., income and wealth inequality have been rising since the 1970s such that the top 10% of income holders in 2010 earned approximately 50% of the country’s total income and the top 10% of wealth holders possessed about 70% of the country’s total net wealth (Picketty & Saez, 2014). Research has also shown that wealth and income are positively linked to psychological well-being (e.g., Headey & Wooden, 2004). However, as highlighted by the American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on SES (2007) and others (e.g., Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Liu et al., 2004; Lott, 2002), the field of psychology has paid limited attention to social class despite its importance as a cultural and contextual factor. Researchers have, therefore, been urged to integrate social class into psychological research (Liu & Ali, 2008; Lott, 2012; Kraus & Stephens, 2012).

One reason for the paucity of research on social class is its lack of conceptual clarity as a psychological phenomenon (APA Task Force on SES, 2007; Diemer & Ali, 2009). Within the social sciences, the terms social class and SES have been used interchangeably despite
definitional differences (APA Task Force on SES, 2007). SES, measured via quantitative indicators such as income, occupation type, and educational attainment, is intended to capture a person’s access to material resources; this assumes that income, education, and occupational prestige are positively related to material access (Diemer & Ali, 2009). However, this definition does not fully capture the subjective effects of the intergenerational transmission of inequalities based on class differences (e.g., wealth; Fouad & Brown, 2000). A psychological definition of social class is more expansive—it considers how a person’s privilege and power are accorded to them differentially based on their material resources, which shape how they understand themselves and others (APA Task Force on SES, 2007; Diemer & Ali, 2009). In response, psychologists have advanced social class conceptualizations that adopt an idiographic perspective by focusing on the psychological effects of holding particular class identities (e.g., Social Class Worldview Model; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004) or social statuses (e.g., Differential Status Identity Model: Fouad & Brown, 2000).

**The Social Class Worldview Model**

The Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM; Liu et al., 2004; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004) refers to the “beliefs and attitudes that help the individual to understand the demands of one’s economic culture, develop the behaviors necessary to meet the economic culture demands, and recognize how classism functions in one’s life” (Liu et al., 2004, p. 9). In other words, the SCWM describes a person’s beliefs and attitudes as shaped by class awareness and messages. The three central components of SCWM include *economic culture, intrapsychic framework,* and *classism.* The *economic culture* refers to a person’s environment, which exerts demands on them to survive and maintain their social standing. These demands can be cultural (e.g., tastes), social (e.g., social networks), or related to human capital (e.g., skills). Within the SCWM, college can
be considered a type of economic culture that SLI inhabit where they are expected to demonstrate preferences, social connections, and skills that fit their environment’s norms.

The *intrapsychic framework* captures how an individual understands these expectations set by their economic culture and translates them into behaviors that allow the person to meet these expectations. These behaviors need not be overt in nature, but instead symbolize the mechanisms by which a person maintains their social position. Examples include lifestyle choices, class-oriented behaviors, relationships to commodities, and points of social reference. In the case of SLI in a university, this refers to the ways that individuals may dress, speak, and exhibit tastes that reflect an upwardly mobile environment as related to the premise that college boosts one’s social mobility.

Last, *classism* refers to discrimination and prejudice toward individuals who deviate from the demands of their economic culture. Classism may be upward (towards the “elite”), downward (towards those who seem to be worse off), lateral (towards those of similar rank), or internalized (towards oneself). Negative feelings or thoughts are postulated to be associated with internalized classism. Thus, SLI who perceive themselves to be failing to meet (or exceed) the classed expectations of college may experience emotional distress. Indeed, some empirical evidence demonstrated that SLI experienced a higher incidence of classism and heightened psychological symptoms as compared to their wealthier counterparts (Thompson & Subich, 2013).

Since discrimination and prejudice are mechanisms of stigmatization, encounters of classism are inextricably tied to the stigma a person experiences from their social class identity (Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004; Major & O’Brien, 2005). According to the SCWM, low-income students’ beliefs and attitudes toward their own class identity will begin to reflect the derogatory
messages they receive and internalize about their social class from others. The experience of class stigma is especially likely to be heightened in contexts such as college campuses where classism is prevalent. Indeed, in their study of 950 students in a private liberal arts school, Langhout, Rosselli, and Feinstein (2007) reported that 43% to 80% of their participants endorsed at least one incident of classism.

**The Differential Status Identity Model**

The Differential Status Identity Model (DSIM; Fouad & Brown, 2000) posits that an individual’s behaviors and psychological development are influenced by their perceptions of their social status. A person’s race/ethnicity and social class influence how they view themselves as “the same or different from others in society” and “it is the perception of difference from others on salient dimensions, or their differential status identity, that is a direct influence on development” (Fouad & Brown, 2000, p. 380). Social status is determined by an individual’s access to economic resources (e.g., income, education, wealth), level of social prestige (e.g., occupational prestige, connection with others), and level of social power (e.g., political participation, ability to influence policy; Fouad & Brown, 2000; Rossides, 1990). Because people differ in their inherited wealth and earning potential (Picketty & Saez, 2014), the DSIM includes both income and wealth as economic indicators that influence a person’s subjective perceptions of their social status (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

According to the DSIM, ordinant and subordinate status groups play important roles in the stratification of individuals. Ordinant groups are comprised of individuals who are regarded (or who regard themselves) as having higher social status positions. Conversely, subordinate groups refer to individuals with lower social status positions. The former is afforded greater economic resources, power, and privilege. Because of the intersectional nature of social status, a
person can inhabit a combination of ordinant and subordinate groups. For example, a wealthy African-American person straddles an ordinant (wealthy) and subordinate (racial-ethnic minority) group in the U.S. Fouad and Brown (2000) posited that members of subordinate groups are impacted more strongly by their social ranks as compared to their ordinant counterparts, given that the former has lower levels of material access, power, and prestige.

Context is important in the DSIM and is posited to affect the extent to which one perceives oneself as ordinant or subordinant in status. For SLI, college can be a space of transition where close encounters with individuals from different social class backgrounds first occur (Langhout et al., 2007; Ostrove & Long, 2007). Given that higher education is commonly viewed as an equalizer of class differences, social norms that celebrate upward mobility are perpetuated in college (Goldthorpe, 2003). As members of the subordinate group, SLI are expected to perceive greater salience of class stigma when interacting with others of high social status (Fouad & Brown, 2000; Jones, 2003).

Taken together, the SCW and DSI models offer psychological conceptualizations of social class that further our understanding of low-income students’ experiences in college. Specifically, the SCWM describes the many ways through which class is experienced and embodied by SLI as they navigate experiences of classism in college. The DSIM emphasizes the psychological impact of social stratification on low-income students’ perceptions of themselves, which includes amplifying the salience of their social status in the college context. Central to these models’ explanations of social class is the experience of class stigma, which is posited to impact an individual’s overall development, self-expression, and psychological well-being.

**Stigma**
Psychological perspectives of stigma have been influenced by Goffman’s (1963) sociological work on stigma concealment (Major & O’Brien, 2005). In his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*, Goffman used case studies and autobiographies to illustrate the experiences of individuals with stigmas, their perceptions of themselves, and the ways through which they managed their stigmas in the presence of others. Stigma is defined as a personal attribute that diminishes the individual “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3).

In psychology, stigma is described as an attribute that “conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular society” (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998, p. 505). Stigmas are socially constructed and dependent on time and culture (Claire, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Crocker et al., 1998; Major & O’Brien, 2005). Features of an individual’s stigma may be visible or invisible (Major & O’Brien, 2005). The negative implications of possessing a stigma are well-established. Research has shown that individuals with stigmatized social identities encounter negative treatment (e.g., Jones et al., 1984), discrimination (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999), and social exclusion (e.g., Major & Eccleston, 2004). Additionally, they face barriers to fair housing, education, healthcare, and legal treatment (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Crocker & Major, 1989; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

**Stigma Concealment and Passing**

Goffman (1963) posited that individuals are compelled to manage their impressions to disidentify themselves from their stigmas. He highlighted the complex decision-making processes involved in deciding whether or not to hide or share one’s stigma; he stated: “To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on… and in each case, to
whom, how, when, and where” (p. 24). But, not all stigmatized identities can be hidden and a variety of factors may determine how a person chooses to manage their stigmatized identities.

One management strategy is to conceal or to pass as someone without stigma. During the Jim Crow era in the U.S., some individuals who were of mixed Black and White lineage engaged in racial passing to appear White as a measure of protection (Cunningham, 1997; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Walden-Kaufman, 1999). Although the stigmatization of being Black continues to persist today, the nature of racial passing has morphed. In a qualitative study of 40 biracial adults (participants identified as Black and White) of which the majority were women from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds, Khanna and Johnson (2010) highlighted different ways participants did their “racial identity work” (p. 386). Participants used verbal (dis)identification (e.g., declaring oneself Black), selective disclosure of racial identity, manipulation of physical appearance (e.g., hair) and cultural symbols (e.g., dress), and selective association with individuals of particular groups in order to pass in different “directions” (i.e., as White or Black). Decisions depended upon their contexts and participants consistently reported making choices that allowed them to avoid having a stigmatized identity.

In another qualitative study with 11 light-skin African American adults in the U.S., Cunningham (1997) highlighted the effects of racial passing in the context of racial identity formation. Using semi-structured interviews, the author highlighted that participants endorsed passing as non-Black in response to racist comments or in order to distance themselves from being targeted. Despite its protective intent, Cunningham noted that many participants felt discomfort, shame, and frustration when they passed. The underlying motivation to avoid being perceived as deviant as postulated by Goffman (1963), therefore, appears to remain a motivating force for identity concealment.
With respect to sexual identity, Cain (1991) created a typology of reasons behind men’s disclosures and concealment of their gay identity. He conducted interviews with 38 adult men, the majority of whom identified as gay and were highly educated in Canada. Participants reported concealing their gay identity for a variety of reasons, including because they deemed their sexual identity to be irrelevant in particular social contexts, wanted to respect others’ beliefs, felt that the risks of disclosure outweighed its benefits, or felt insecure about being gay. Some reflected feeling socially distant because of their reluctance to share personal details that may have facilitated stronger connections with others. Aligned with Goffman’s (1963) work, Cain noted that participants’ overarching reason for hiding their sexual identity was to avoid being stigmatized as gay.

More recently, researchers have started to distinguish between disclosure and concealment as unique constructs in identity management (e.g., Jackson & Mohr, 2016). While past studies on sexual minorities’ “coming out” have treated concealment and disclosure as opposite ends of a single continuum (e.g., Cain, 1991), some recent investigations have measured them separately (e.g., King et al., 2017). In a study of 301 graduate and undergraduate students who identified as gay, lesbian, and bisexual, Jackson and Mohr (2016) assessed concealment behavior, concealment motivation, and nondisclosure with respect to sexual orientation. Using multiple regression analyses, the authors found that while concealment behavior was uniquely predictive of health (i.e., increased depression and decreased life satisfaction) and higher levels of self-stigma, nondisclosure did not relate to levels of depression, life satisfaction, or self-stigma. The authors, therefore, concluded that disclosure and concealment are driven by different goals; the former is motivated by a desire for intimacy and the latter by an avoidance of rejection.
Taken together, individuals appear to be motivated to pass as a member of the ordinant group to avoid harm and in an effort to reap the benefits of being relatively privileged (Leary, 1999). However, passing or concealing also incurs psychological and social costs. In order to better understand these implications, theorists have proposed frameworks that explicate the psychological process of stigma concealment.

**Theories of Stigma Concealment**

Theorists have expanded Goffman’s (1963) original theory to include the psychological implications of living with an invisible, or concealable, stigma. Crocker and Major (1989) postulated that individuals with a concealable stigma may be at a disadvantage as compared to those with visible stigmas because the former may have less access to the self-protective properties of being a member of a subordinate group (e.g., being able to attribute negative treatment to prejudice). These authors postulated that the possession of stigma, depending on its visibility, may have differential effects on self-esteem. Despite their contributions, these early theories do not adequately explicate the antecedents and consequences of stigma concealment. They also do not link the various situational, behavioral, and intrapsychic components of stigma concealment.

Scholars in organizational and vocational psychology have expanded this work to propose models that explicate the process of sexual identity management in the workplace (Claire et al., 2005; Lidderdale, Croteau, Anderson, Tovar-Murray, & Davis, 2007). For example, Claire et al. (2005) posited that both situation-level and person-level differences contribute to workers’ decisions to pass or reveal their concealable stigmas in the workplace. The situation-level factors encompass organizational climate, industry norms and expectations, and the relationship(s) between the worker and others. Person-level differences include traits such as
levels of risk-taking and self-monitoring. Lidderdale et al. (2007) proposed a workplace sexual identity model based on social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) to delineate the process through which employees learn, acquire, and implement concealment strategies in the workplace. Similar to Claire et al., these authors emphasized the roles of organizational climate and interpersonal factors in predicting concealment or disclosure. Although these models extended earlier work by acknowledging the contributions of contextual factors to identity management, their definitions of these situation-level predictors remained relatively global and static (e.g., measures of workplace diversity climate that may not reflect the fluctuations in people’s perceptions of inclusion) and neglected the affective implications of concealment.

The Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral Model

Pachankis’ (2007) Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral (CAB) model of stigma concealment was proposed to address the limitations of earlier theories. It is an integrative theory that connects the thoughts, feelings, and actions experienced or enacted by an individual as a consequence of having a concealable stigma. For a visual representation, see Figure 1.

The CAB model encompasses five components: situation, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and self-evaluative implications. To start, the model postulates that in any scenario of potential stigma concealment, the individual will first consider the situation at hand before deciding whether or not to conceal. The individual considers their stigma salience in the given situation. Pachankis (2007) notes that individuals who find themselves to be minority members of a group are likely to experience greater stigma salience because the experience increases the “relative accessibility of stigma-related thoughts or concerns” (p. 331).

Next, the individual is faced with their potential threat of discovery, which ranges in its severity. This threat depends on the degree to which their stigmatized identity is targeted or challenged in a given situation. Those whose identities are questioned will experience higher levels of threat of discovery as compared to those whose identities are less targeted.

Last, the individual considers the potential consequences of being discovered should they disclose their stigmatized identity. These feared consequences are distressing and may entail physical safety concerns (e.g., being victimized) and other interpersonal outcomes (e.g., being
rejected by others). Because these consequences are based on the individual’s perceptions, their accuracy in reflecting the actual outcomes of disclosing varies. Overall, the more negative their perceived outcomes, the more likely the individual is to mask or conceal their stigma.

These considerations of the situation have cognitive and affective implications, which refer to the thoughts and emotions that arise in the individual when they are confronted with decisions on whether to conceal their stigmatized identities. The cognitive implications include preoccupation, vigilance, and suspiciousness. Pachankis (2007) described preoccupation as keeping one’s stigma “in constant awareness” (p. 332), which can be persistent and reduces one’s cognitive capacity for other activities. Additionally, the individual may exhibit increased vigilance about their surroundings in an effort to avoid being discovered as a stigma holder. While close attention to interpersonal cues may help one predict how others might react to their stigma, the burden of doing so takes a psychological toll on the person. For example, the individual may become more suspicious during social interactions.

Together, these cognitive implications influence one’s affect and give rise to negative moods. Per Pachankis (2007), the affective implications refer to the negative feelings of anxiety, depression, hostility, demoralization, guilt, and shame associated with the emotional burden of masking an individual’s identity. Both cognitive and affective influences are bidirectional and together they motivate a person’s concealment behaviors.

Next, the behavioral implications are the actions or strategies used by the individual to keep their stigma from being discovered. These actions include managing and monitoring their impressions (e.g., self-censorship), avoiding and isolating oneself from others, and behaving in ways that jeopardize their relationships (e.g., lying). Ironically, individuals who choose to
conceal their stigma for fear of being rejected by others forfeit their opportunities to gain corrective feedback (e.g., affirmation) around their stigma from disclosure.

In combination, the CAB model predicts that concealment-oriented actions reinforce the individual’s negative self-evaluation, including having a negative self-view, reduced self-efficacy, and more ambivalence about their stigmatized identity. Since the identity is invisible, concealing it further limits individuals from accessing the protective functions of being a member of a group. The model is cyclical such that these self-evaluations are postulated to shape how the individual perceives their situation, thinks, feels, and acts the next time they are prompted to conceal their stigma. Some empirical findings have supported the situational, behavioral, and affective characteristics that relate to stigma concealment in Pachankis’ (2007) CAB model.

**Situational characteristics that relate to stigma concealment.** Past research has demonstrated the influence of situational characteristics on participants’ disclosure and concealment of their stigmatized sexual identities. Chrobot-Mason, Button, and DiClementi (2001) conducted a quantitative study of 255 lesbian and gay workers across 82 firms to assess whether participants’ perceived workplace climate related to their use of strategies to manage their sexual identity. Most of the participants were male, White, and highly educated, with more than 25% of them possessing graduate degrees. Adapting scales from previous research (Button, 1996), workplace climate was measured based on perceived friendliness and affirmation toward sexual minorities and identity concealment was measured based on the use of counterfeiting or avoidance strategies. Although the authors found that the relationship between workplace climate and use of counterfeiting was nonsignificant, climate was negatively related to avoidance
strategies ($\beta = -.36, p < .01$). In other words, the less affirming lesbian and gay employees perceived their workplace to be, the more they avoided exposing their sexual identities.

In a study of 534 lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) workers who were mostly White and highly-educated, Ragins, Singh, and Cornwell (2007) assessed whether participants’ perceived threat of discrimination, presence of other queer coworkers, and social support were linked with sexual identity disclosure. Both disclosure and concealment were measured using an adapted “out at work” scale used by Croteau and Lark (1995) in which higher disclosure scores indicated lower concealment. Ragins et al. found all three situational factors to be significantly predictive of participants’ degree of disclosure. The presence of gay and lesbian coworkers was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .22, \Delta R^2 = .05, p < .001$), followed by perceived workplace support ($\beta = .15, \Delta R^2 = .02, p < .001$), and perceived past discrimination ($\beta = .12, \Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$). LGB workers who perceived themselves to be surrounded by similar others and to be well-supported were more likely to disclose their sexual identity. Contrary to the authors’ prediction, participants who reported higher levels of previous discrimination based on their sexual orientation were more likely to disclose.

Taken together, LGB workers concealed more in less welcoming environments (Chrobok-Mason et al., 2001) and concealed less in more supportive workplaces and in the presence of other LGB colleagues (Ragins et al., 2007). In other words, people’s perceptions of safety, affirmation, and minority status were related to their levels of concealment. Although these studies did not test concealment based on social class differences, these results support Pachankis’ (2007) conceptualization of stigma concealment as being situationally-dependent.

**Behavioral characteristics that relate to stigma concealment.** People are posited to use impression management behaviors and social avoidance to conceal their stigmas depending upon
their circumstances (Pachankis, 2007). These actions may include keeping secrets, changing the way one appears or behaves, and physically or emotionally distancing from others. Indeed, research has shown that individuals use a variety of behavioral strategies to conceal their stigmatized identities. Although the following studies documented how sexual minorities concealed their identities (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2006; Woods, 1994; Woods & Harbeck, 2008), these findings provide some insight to the nature of concealing behaviors that can be used by individuals with stigmatized class identities.

In a phenomenological study of 12 elementary and secondary school lesbian physical educators, Woods and Harbeck (2008) identified several ways in which the participants concealed their lesbian identity. The majority of participants were White and of middle-class backgrounds. The authors noted two categories of concealment strategies: active concealment of their lesbian identity and distancing from topics related to homosexuality. To conceal, many participants reported passing as straight to their students and coworkers by changing the pronouns or names of romantic partners from female to male and inviting gay male friends as dates to social activities. Participants also avoided interactions that may have required them to share personal information. Others noted presenting themselves as stern, aloof, or task-oriented to dissuade individuals from delving into their private lives. To distance themselves from homosexuality, participants intentionally ignored homophobic comments targeted at them, disregarded rumors about their sexuality, and refrained from excessive contact with students whom they suspected (or knew) were queer. While the authors emphasized that these strategies were used in response to heterosexism, they noted that “no simple pattern emerged” (p. 149) as to when or how participants concealed.
These counterfeiting and avoidance strategies are consistent with those identified in Woods’ (1994) earlier qualitative study of 70 gay men in various professions across 10 U.S. cities. Based on interviews with upper- and upper-middle class participants who were mostly White, he proposed the term “counterfeiting” to describe active passing attempts. Counterfeiting techniques included fabricating a heterosexual life (e.g., providing details about sex with women), going against the gay stereotype (e.g., avoiding appearing “effeminate”), and hiding evidence that may indicate any countercultural activity. Avoidance techniques included social avoidance (e.g., being absent from social activities), verbal avoidance (e.g., changing the topic), and being aloof.

In a quantitative study examining social anxiety among young gay men, Pachankis and Goldfried (2006) posed an open-ended question that asked about ways in which participants may have changed their behavior to avoid being identified or attacked as gay. Seventy-five percent of the 87 college student participants reported engaging in such strategies. Examples of these behaviors included avoiding certain places, appearing more masculine, and monitoring their speech and their company to appear straight.

The counterfeiting and avoidance strategies documented in the aforementioned studies are consistent with the concealment behaviors postulated by Pachankis (2007). Their purpose is to disassociate the individual from their stigma to avoid negative repercussions.

**Affective characteristics that relate to stigma concealment.** Per the CAB model, negative feelings such as anxiety, depression, anger, guilt, and shame may motivate an individual to conceal their stigma (Pachankis, 2007). Masking one’s identity also may intensify negative affect. Indeed, research has demonstrated that possessing and concealing a stigmatized identity
are linked with psychological symptoms (Cohen et al., 2016; Riggle, Rotosky, Black, & Rosenkrantz, 2017; Schrimshaw et al., 2013).

Schrimshaw et al. (2013) conducted a study among 203 non-gay identified men who had sex with men and women to examine the links between concealment, disclosure, and psychological symptoms. The sample was racially and ethnically diverse (33% African-American/Black, 29% Hispanic/Latino, 27% Non-Hispanic White) and approximately 40% of participants earned less than $30,000 annually. The concealment of same-sex behavior was measured with an adapted Self-Concealment Scale (SCS; Larson & Chastain, 1990). Disclosure was measured using an adapted disclosure scale previously used for HIV status (Zea, Reisen, Poppen, Bianchi, & Echeverry, 2005). Positive affect and symptoms of depression and anxiety were measured using the Veit and Ware (1983) Mental Health Inventory. Controlling for race and income, the authors found that higher concealment scores were significantly associated with higher depression ($\beta = .27$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F(2,183) = 4.90$, $p < .01$) and anxiety scores ($\beta = .29$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F(2,183) = 5.63$, $p < .01$), and lowered positive affect ($\beta = -.18$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(2, 183) = 3.41$, $p < .05$). Disclosure was not significantly correlated with any psychological symptoms, suggesting that the constructs of concealment and disclosure may be unique.

Another study examined the relationship between sexual identity concealment and anxiety among a cross-sectional study of 314 undergraduate students, half of whom identified as sexual minorities (Cohen et al., 2016). The majority of participants identified as White and as women. Concealment was measured using the single item, “How open in general are you now about your sexual orientation?” Controlling for gender, the authors found that concealment was a significant predictor of social phobia ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$) as measured by the Social Phobia Diagnostic Questionnaire (Newman, Kachin, Zuellig, Constantino, & Cashman-McGrath, 2003).
but no relationships existed between concealment and the other anxiety symptomology such as generalized anxiety disorder. It is important to note that this study’s results may be limited by its use of a single item of outness to measure concealment.

Another study of 378 adults by Riggle et al. (2017) demonstrated a positive link between concealment and depressive symptoms. Participants were primarily White and identified as men, women, transgender, or non-binary. They were highly educated, with 85% of respondents having obtained postsecondary degrees. LGB identity concealment was measured using an adapted SCS (Larson & Chastain, 1990) and disclosure was assessed via an adapted Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Depressive symptoms, stress, and psychological well-being were measured using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977), Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1988), and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989) respectively. As predicted, concealment was positively correlated with depressive symptoms ($r = .29, p < .01$) and stress ($r = .26, p < .01$). Conversely, disclosure was negatively correlated with depression ($r = -.20, p < .01$) and stress ($r = -.22, p < .01$). Despite controlling for race, education, and general outness, concealment accounted for additional variance in the depression scores. Specifically, greater concealment was associated with more depressive symptoms ($\beta = .12, 95\% \text{ CI } [.022, .21], p < .01$). Controlling for education and outness, greater concealment also was associated with lower psychological well-being ($\beta = -.24, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.39, -.15], p < .01$). These results suggest that LGB identity concealment significantly predicts psychological well-being and distress.

Although these studies did not test social class concealment, their findings suggest that stigma concealment predicts negative affect, including depression and anxiety (Cohen et al., 2016; Riggle et al., 2017; Schrimshaw et al., 2013). Greater concealment also is linked with
lower psychological well-being and less positive affect (Riggle et al., 2017; Scrimshaw et al., 2013). However, these studies’ reliance on cross-sectional data limits our ability to infer directionality in the relationships between concealment and mood symptoms. Additionally, assessments at single time-points may only capture participants’ global concealment and therefore do not fully reflect the fluctuations in concealment.

**Summary.** In sum, these studies demonstrated the importance of integrating the situational, behavioral, and affective characteristics in our examination of stigma concealment as a psychological process. More recently, scholars have advanced psychological conceptualizations of class as a form of social identity that also is subject to stigmatization (e.g., Fouad & Brown, 2000). One way to extend our understanding of social class identity was to evaluate its psychological implications on individuals, as a concealable stigma, using the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007).

**Social Class Identity as a Concealable Stigma**

Social class identity can be a considered a form of concealable stigma for SLI. SLI can pass as belonging to the middle- or upper-classes by manipulating such things as their clothing, speech, and manner (Granfield, 1991). Given that classism is prevalent in college (e.g., Langhout et al., 2007; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2010), SLI will likely encounter discrimination based on negative perceptions of their class identities as inferior. The premise of college as a vehicle for upward social mobility further increases the stigma of being low-income. This is consistent with the SCWM’s description that being in a particular economic culture (i.e., college) exerts certain psychological demands (i.e., stigma) that stem from classist expectations (Liu et al., 2004). According to the DSIM, low-income students’ social class salience is heightened in college because they are interacting with people from different class backgrounds—class becomes a
prominent aspect of low-income students’ social identity (Fouad & Brown, 2000). In college, experiences of class-based discrimination are expected to increase students’ internalized class stigma.

Results from a recent study support these propositions. Warnock and Hurst (2016) conducted a qualitative study of members of a newly formed group for low-income, first-generation students or working-class (LIFGWC) students in a liberal arts college. Using semi-structured interviews and inductive data analysis, the authors examined 16 participants’ experiences of being an LIFGWC student in an elite institution and their benefits of establishing a campus group based on social class identity. All of the students identified as belonging to the lower social classes (i.e., low-income, working-class, lower-class). Most participants identified as women and half of them identified as racial-ethnic minorities.

A main theme that emerged from the data pertained to social class as an “invisible yet stigmatized identity” (Warnock & Hurst, 2016, p. 266). This was articulated by a biracial student who identified as lower-class:

Not everyone’s rich even though you cannot see it. Because class is totally invisible. The point of this was to make class visible. That was our thing. It’s that you cannot walk around and say, “He’s poor, he’s poor, she’s rich.” You do not know until you’re faced with a decision where you’re like, “Oh, hey let’s all go skiing.” And one person’s like, “Oh, I can’t go skiing, cause I don’t have any money.” (p. 266)

Participants also reported that experiencing their class backgrounds as hidden motivated them to increase class awareness on campus by becoming actively involved with the student group.

The authors noted the difficulty for participants to be seen as working-class and feel proud of their membership because of their experiences with downward classism. For example,
participants stated that they struggled to feel proud of their class backgrounds because they were
in college to become upwardly mobile, which effectively distances them from their class-of-
origin. As a whole, the invisible and stigmatized nature of social class identity made it
challenging for students to build and sustain a community with each other—they reported that it
felt shameful or embarrassing to go to the “poor kids’ table” (p. 268). Consistent with the DSIM,
White participants reported being perceived as rich, which reflects the confluence of race and
SES in ranking one’s social status (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

This study illustrated the concealable nature of social class as a stigma as experienced by
LIFGWC students in a school where classism was prevalent. However, it did not examine their
class concealment processes. Limited empirical research exists that examines the situational,
behavioral, and affective characteristics of social class concealment according to Pachankis’
(2007) CAB model.

The Situational, Behavioral, and Affective Characteristics of Social Class Concealment

The limited research that has investigated some elements of social class concealment has
utilized qualitative designs to explicate the experiences of adults and college students of lower
social status. Although none of these explicitly tested the CAB model, findings from these
studies offer some insight into the situational, behavioral, and affective characteristics of
people’s class concealment processes.

Social class concealment among adults. Among a sample of 93 adults who identified as
low-income, Reutter et al. (2009) examined the experiences of poverty stigma in two Canadian
cities. The sample mainly consisted of women, aged 30 to 54 years, who earned less than
$20,000 annually. Slightly more than half of the participants completed high school or less.
Using thematic content analysis, the authors found that these adults who are low-income
experienced poverty stigma from family, friends, neighbors, and strangers. They reported being frequently confronted by others who lacked empathy and/or understanding of poverty. For instance, participants noted that they were often blamed for causing their financial woes and felt condescended to by others. In response, participants withdrew from their social circles and concealed their poverty status to avoid further judgment.

These participants also described hiding their poverty when interacting with wealthier people to avoid discrimination or negative feelings (Reutter et al., 2009). To conceal, participants used two main strategies: “nondisclosure” and “nontruths” (p. 305). Nondisclosure referred to secrecy and active suppression of poverty indicators (e.g., government assistance, housing subsidy, food insecurity). Participants described keeping secrets from various people: relatives, strangers, fellow churchgoers, landlords, and their employers. Nontruths were lies told to family and friends to mask their underlying reasons for being unable to afford certain activities or amenities. One participant said it in this way,

“If there’s something that I can’t partake in like say some people are going to a movie and they ask me to come along and I can’t afford it, I’m not going to say, ‘I can’t afford it.’ I’m just going to say, ‘Oh gosh, I’ve already got something lined up. I won’t be able to.’” (p. 305)

In other words, participants kept secrets and lied to conceal their poverty. These findings are consistent with the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007): adults who are low-income face increased poverty stigma in the presence of those who are not affected by poverty (i.e., situation), feel ashamed of their financial status (i.e., affect), and in turn conceal their stigma (i.e., behavior).

**Social class concealment among college students.** Granfield (1991) observed and interviewed 23 working-class students in an elite law school across three years to understand
their class-related experiences. Their peers were primarily White and middle-class. Granfield stated that while many participants were motivated by their working-class backgrounds to attend law school, they later realized that their “speech, attire, values, and experiences” (p. 336) diverged greatly from their wealthier peers. For example, a participant became self-conscious about her speech when she heard “proper” English used by her middle-class peers. Participants also experienced classism frequently, which influenced how they responded or interacted with others. For example, one student noted avoiding others because they were surprised that her husband had worked for Radio Shack. Other participants noted pruning contacts to avoid social interactions that may have disclosed their class identities. Overall, it appeared that students’ wariness of being seen as working-class was influenced by their perceptions of their surroundings, namely their peers’ higher social statuses.

Students in this study also concealed their class identities in order to be socially accepted and to advance their careers (Granfield, 1991). For example, one participant recounted being encouraged by his adviser to downplay his social class in job interviews in an effort to increase his attractiveness as an applicant. Another student described the implicit, yet critical, dress code required to signal one’s (appropriate) social class during interviews. He felt compelled to have the “right” suit to signal his aspirational middle- or upper-class status.

Although not examined according to the CAB model, themes that emerged from these data suggested that it seemed costly to demonstrate one’s working-class status during these evaluations because of the bias that favored employing law students that fit the profession’s social class norms. In other words, the tempered job prospect may have functioned as a threat to discovery and incentivized students to conceal their class identities. However, in doing so, students experienced ambivalence, guilt, and conflict from detaching from their working-class
roots in order to gain more career opportunities, which is consistent with the CAB model’s proposed pathways.

In another qualitative study of 30 White SLI from either an elite liberal arts college or a state college, Aries and Seider (2005) examined how the environment shaped class and college experiences. Participants attending the elite college expressed strong sentiments about being an outsider. For example, they reported having difficulties connecting with their wealthier peers because of different tastes and preferences and due to their limited financial ability to engage in costly social events (e.g., expensive restaurants, international travel). Some struggled to disclose their financial statuses (for example, participants avoided dining out or ordering food at restaurants, participants chose not to share their parents’ occupations with their peers). In contrast, participants in the state college reported that their low-income status did not feel particularly salient because many of their peers also were less affluent. Yet, similar to those students attending the elite college, some students reported feeling inferior to their peers who were perceived to be wealthy.

Similarly, Dias (2011) showed that FGCS frequently hid their social class or passed as middle-class in their prestigious college settings. Using grounded theory, the author examined class negotiation experiences of 25 FGCS, the majority of whom identified as racial/ethnic minorities, from three liberal arts institutions. Many participants reported changing the way they spoke, dressed, or talked about their financial concerns in order to better fit in with peers they perceived to be of higher social status. These participants also reported experiencing prejudice from their peers; they believed they were perceived as less intelligent, were questioned about their desiringness to be a student, and felt that their class-related experiences were dismissed. The author postulated that these experiences with discrimination reminded students of the
negative ramifications should people discover their first-generation status. Consequently, students became hypervigilant about passing as middle-class and altered the way they carried themselves to conceal their stigma (e.g., changing their speech to sound “smarter” and pretending to be unaffected by financial concerns; Dias).

Similar trends were observed in a qualitative study of first-generation, working-class students in Canada (Lehmann, 2009). The authors interviewed 75 participants during their first year of studies and re-interviewed 55 of them in their second year to examine how they experienced and navigated class differences in the university setting. The majority of participants identified as White and as women. The authors defined students’ working-class backgrounds based on their parents’ blue-collar occupations (e.g., factory work, lower-level service jobs). Themes from the interviews suggested that participants perceived themselves as fitting in poorly within their classrooms and dormitories. Specifically, they described feeling uncomfortable whenever their peers discussed their middle- or upper-class mores (e.g., legacy of college graduates) because these conversations reinforced participants’ sense that their own class background was deviant from the norm. Participants reported that their peers were surprised and, at times, condescending when participants disclosed their parents’ jobs. These exchanges amplified participants’ sense of displacement and heightened their doubts about their worthiness to be in college.

**Summary and next steps.** Taken together, results from this series of qualitative investigations suggest that students experience heightened class stigma when they perceive themselves as occupying lower class positions relative to others (Aries & Seider, 2005; Dias, 2011; Lehmann, 2009). Subsequently, they conceal their class identities to avoid negative outcomes (Granfield, 1991), which are tied to feeling of disconnection and discomfort (Aries &
Seider, 2005; Lehmann, 2009). These interrelated aspects of social class concealment are consistent with the mechanisms hypothesized by the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007). They also are aligned with the DSIM, which stipulates that that the salience of one’s social status is amplified when they inhabit a subordinate position (Fouad & Brown, 2000). Additionally, students’ past encounters of classism intensify their fears of experiencing similar predicaments, which motivate them to keep their class identities hidden (Dias, 2011). This is consistent with the SCWM which suggests that these experiences of classism contribute to internalized class stigma (Liu, Soleck et al., 2004).

As a whole, these studies’ findings support the interrelationships between the situational, behavioral, and affective characteristics of social class concealment as posited by the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007). Social class stigma is commonly experienced by individuals who are low-income across settings, and particularly so in situations where they are surrounded by affluent people. In response, they conceal their social class in different ways, but these actions are accompanied by psychological symptoms such as negative mood.

Yet, no study has examined the daily process of concealment for SLI. We have limited knowledge about the contextual characteristics and range of concealing behaviors that occur on a daily basis for SLI. Although these qualitative studies offer rich descriptions about low-income and working-class participants’ class concealment experiences, their reliance on interviews at single time-points may not adequately capture the range of daily concealment experiences due to the constraints of long-term recall (Fisher & To, 2012). For instance, participants may have only been able to report their most salient concealment events. Quantitative designs also have been scarcely used to test the postulated links related to class concealment.
One exception is an experience sampling study conducted by Frable et al. (1998). The authors tracked the experiences of students with concealable or conspicuous stigmas while they were attending an Ivy League university. The authors categorized the participants into 5 groups based upon stigma and prestige: 18 students with concealable stigmas (sexual minority, bulimic, and low family income), 16 with conspicuous stigma (Black/African American, overweight, speech impediment), 18 with concealable prestige (national athletes, famous parents, high family income), 14 with conspicuous prestige (physically attractive), and 20 controls (i.e., individuals who did not possess any of the listed stigmas or prestigious attributes). For 11 days, participants completed a total of five reports daily by responding each time that their programmed watches “beeped.” The reports assessed for self-esteem and affect. Reports of anxiety, depression, and hostility were measured using the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist (Zuckerman & Lubin, 1965). Participants also provided details about their locations, current activities, and relationships to the interaction partners and to their partners’ social identities.

Frable et al. (1998) found that participants with concealable stigmas reported lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of anxious and depressed affect when compared to all other groups. Additionally, participants reported higher self-esteem and lower anxious and depressed mood when surrounded by similar others (i.e., those who shared similar stigma) as compared to times when they were with people who were dissimilar. The daily reports also showed that participants with hidden stigmas were the least socially engaged.

In conclusion, although Frable et al.’s (1998) study found that students with concealable stigmas experienced greater symptomology and lowered self-esteem as compared to other groups, the authors did not test whether the students’ levels of concealment accounted for these differences. Future research is, therefore, needed in order to more carefully examine stigma
concealment. Daily diary designs provide one such mechanism to address limitations of prior research and extend our understanding of social class stigma concealment among college SLI (Cohen et al., 2016; Zirkel et al., 2015).

The Daily Diary Methodology

History and Introduction

Diary designs are characterized by their use of intensive, repeated measurements to capture variables and phenomena of interest as they occur (Iida et al., 2012). The inclusion of diary reports in scientific research dates back to Munsterberg’s recording of his mood several times a day while performing other experimental tasks in 1892 because he was skeptical about the ability to sufficiently induce emotions in the laboratory (Wilhelm, Perrez, & Pawlik, 2012). In psychology, Csikszentmihalyi, Larson, and Prescott (1977) conducted the earliest diary study to track adolescents’ social patterns using structured forms at planned intervals (Iida et al., 2012). Today, their diary-based approach is called the experience sampling methodology (ESM; Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1983).

Contemporary diary designs, such as ESM, are distinguished by their unique characteristics that make them more suitable for specific research questions or intents. For example, the traditional daily diary study is designed to capture people’s subjective experiences daily (Lischetzke, 2014) whereas the ESM often requires multiple points of assessments per day (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1983). The ambulatory momentary assessment study, another diary design, is typically used to track individuals’ physiological changes and relies less heavily on self-reports (Fahrenberg & Myrtek, 1996). The main purpose of diary designs is to examine participants’ experiences in vivo or in situ; that is, within their contexts and as they are lived (Bolger et al., 2003). They purport to do so by allowing participants to track their thoughts,
feelings, behaviors, and contexts as they proceed with their daily routines, and often yields both quantitative and qualitative data. As such, diary studies offer stronger claims of generalizability of their findings to the real world (Bolger et al., 2003).

Diary designs are further distinguished by their reporting interval: time-based or event-based (Bolger et al., 2003). Time-based designs are used to track phenomena as they transpire, which allow researchers to track within-person changes. Intervals can be fixed (i.e., consistent times), random (i.e., random times), or mixed between the two. Event-based designs are used to track events that occur rarely whereby participants are asked to report on these rare events when (or shortly after) they happen. As a whole, diary studies are well-suited to address questions related to the nature and progression of everyday phenomena. Its micro-longitudinal nature allows researchers to examine within-person variability.

**Advantages over Cross-Sectional Designs**

Diary designs offer several advantages over cross-sectional designs when used to study naturally occurring events. They include: closer proximity to daily experiences, reduced retrospective bias in self-report, and the availability of nested data to parse out within- and between-person differences (Fisher & To, 2012; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004; Zirkel et al., 2015). With respect to examining social class concealment, the daily diary design is particularly suitable for three main reasons.

First, it provides researchers access to individual experiences related to class concealment that are elusive and/or dynamic in nature (Zirkel et al., 2015). For example, elements such as students’ concealment strategies, their moods, and associated situational factors may be difficult to track at a granular level using cross-sectional designs and retrospective interviews. Given the dearth of literature available on social class concealment, a daily diary design provides both
qualitative and quantitative data to shed light on the phenomenon. Additionally, its combination of open- and closed-ended questions to prompt participants’ responses reduces their burden of having sufficient awareness to track their experiences “correctly.”

Second, it minimizes recall concerns that may affect the accuracy of participants’ reports of events over longer periods of time (Fisher & To, 2012). Studies that rely on retrospective self-report have been frequently criticized for the potential sources of bias in their data such as memory-based cognitive distortions (Kahneman et al., 2004). Relatedly, the stigmatized and often invisible nature of experiences of class concealment render participants’ reports more vulnerable to distortions in order to portray themselves in a socially acceptable manner. Although the design still relies on self-report, its use of frequent assessments is expected to mitigate these biases.

Third, a daily design study offers multi-level data that is well-suited to examine processes and changes that occur within a person. Given that its design is intended to measure the same phenomenon repeatedly over time, it yields nested data that can be analyzed for patterns that occur within a person as well as changes that occur between persons. By capturing the temporal progression of events, this design allows us to specify the relationship between negative mood and class concealment. Furthermore, its repeated sampling provides higher statistical power in comparison to cross-sectional designs, thereby reducing the need for large sample sizes to detect meaningful differences. As a whole, the daily diary design offers important advantages over cross-sectional methods (quantitative or qualitative) when examining social class concealment.

**Exemplars of Daily Diary Designs**

In a daily diary study, Swim et al. (2007) examined the everyday experiences of heterosexism of 69 lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (34 men, 35 women). Most of the
participants were White and about half of them were college students. During a pre-study orientation, the authors defined heterosexist and non-heterosexist hassles and invited participants to fill out a report for each event. For the next seven days, participants were asked to report up to four heterosexist or non-heterosexist hassles per day. Items in the daily reports asked participants to describe their hassle and to rate (using a Likert scale) how heterosexist and bothersome they perceived the hassle to have been. The authors coded participants’ descriptions of heterosexist hassles and their perpetrators. Broadly, they categorized them as verbal, behavioral, and fear-related hassles.

Swim et al. (2007) found that on average, participants experienced two heterosexist hassles per week. Verbal hassles were most commonly reported (58%) and they included stereotypical comments and threats of violence towards LGB individuals. Behavioral hassles (22%) consisted of social exclusion due to one’s sexual identity, poor treatment at restaurants, and physical aggression (e.g., property damage). Fear-related hassles (13%) were described as moments when participants were afraid of being discovered as sexual minorities. No correlations between participants’ level of outness and prevalence of verbal and behavioral hassles were found. When Swim et al. compared participants’ ratings of being bothered by these heterosexist events during daily reports and their orientation recall, they found that the latter were higher than the former ratings. It is important to note, however, that these results may have been distorted given that the authors treated all cases as single-level data during analysis, which potentially omitted any clustering effects (i.e., daily reports nested within individuals).

In another daily diary study, Beals et al. (2009) examined within-person links between stigma concealment and psychological well-being within a sample of gay men and lesbian women. The sample consisted of 84 participants (47 men and 37 women), who were ethnically
diverse (56% white and 44% racial/ethnic minorities) and were employed in different professions. Over 14 days, participants were asked to complete diary entries on a mixed reporting schedule. First, participants were asked to respond to items that measured levels of concealment and disclosure each time they encountered an opportunity to disclose their sexual orientation (i.e., event-based interval). Second, they were asked to complete a nightly questionnaire that measured psychological outcomes (i.e., fixed interval). Positive affect was measured using a corresponding subscale from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Tellegen, & Clark, 1988), self-esteem was measured using a shortened Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, and life satisfaction was measured using adapted item from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

To examine the within-person relationship between disclosure and well-being, Beals et al. first centered all continuous variables around the person’s mean for comparison and used multilevel modeling for analysis. The authors found that participants’ disclosure was positively related to their end-of-day positive affect, self-esteem, and life satisfaction on days when they had the opportunity to disclose or conceal their sexual orientation ($B_s = .25, .31, \text{ and } .28,$ respectively, all $p$s < .05). Beals et al. also collected qualitative data about the individuals to whom participants disclosed and noted its wide array (e.g., landlady, nurse, bookstore employee), which highlighted the diversity of lesbian and gay individuals’ disclosure experiences.

The aforementioned studies provide concrete examples of how a daily diary design can be used to study a phenomenon that may share similar processes with social class concealment. Swim et al.’s use of qualitative data to shed light on daily heterosexism offers a rationale for collecting descriptive data on the situational and behavioral aspects of class concealment. Informed by the protocols of descriptive daily diary studies (Brinkman & Rickard, 2009; Swim
et al., 2003, 2007), this study used a combination of open- and closed-ended questions, as well as Likert-type scale items to capture low-income students’ routine class concealment experiences. This study adapted Beals et al.’s (2009) use of daily diary entries to examine the link between sexual identity disclosure and positive affect to test the relationship between class concealment and negative mood. Specifically, the study tracked students’ negative mood every morning and evening to examine if it is related to concealment effort. In sum, this study used a daily diary design to obtain qualitative and quantitative data to examine the situational, behavioral, and affective characteristics of everyday class concealment as experienced by SLI.

Summary

Previous research on social class concealment hints at its critical role in shaping the educational experiences of college students, particularly those of lower SES backgrounds (Aries & Seider, 2005; Dias, 2011; Granfield, 1991). On the other hand, scholars have long documented the challenges faced by SLI such as poor academic and social adjustment, which contribute to longer-term outcomes like college attrition and career mobility (Astin, 1993; Ostrove & Long, 2007). Despite these concerns, we have a limited understanding of social class concealment as a daily stressor for SLI or of the psychological implications of social class concealment. The existing identity management literature has primarily relied on cross-sectional methods, which further pose constraints in our understanding of these processes as they occur within a person (Gunthert & Wenze, 2012). To address these gaps, this study used a daily diary design to expand our conceptual understanding of social class concealment as an everyday phenomenon.

The study addressed the following research questions and tested the following hypotheses:

*RQ1:* When, where, and with whom do SLI conceal their social class identities?
RQ2: How do SLI conceal their social class identities on a routine basis?

H1: Heightened morning negative mood will be associated with increased concealment effort later that day.

H2: Concealment effort during the day will be associated with worse evening negative mood after controlling for morning negative mood.

CHAPTER III

Methodology
Participants

A total of 104 participants completed the study (172 completed the baseline survey but did not proceed) between September 2018 and May 2019, which coincided with the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 academic semesters. Data was collected across the span of each semester except during holiday breaks. All participants were undergraduate students enrolled in a large, research intensive university in the Midwest, who self-identified as low-income. Participants were aged 18 to 27 (M = 20, SD = 1.73) years and 77 (74.04%) identified as cisgender women, 25 (24.04%) as cisgender men, and two (1.92%) as genderqueer or non-binary. Of the participants, 52 (50.0%) identified as White/Caucasian, 19 (18.27%) as Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, 16 (15.38%) as Hispanic/Latinx, five (4.81%) as Black/African American, 12 (11.53%) as Bi- or Multiracial. With regard to sexual identity, 80 (76.92%) identified as Straight, 11 (10.58%) as Bisexual, three (2.88%) as Lesbian, two (1.92%) as Gay, two (1.91%) as Queer, and six (5.77%) as having a combination or different identities (e.g., pansexual). Seventeen (16.35%) participants reported having a disability.

Participants indicated their perceived social class according to the following categories: 25 (24.04%) Lower, 37 (35.58%) Working, 27 (25.97%) Lower-Middle, 12 (11.54%) Middle, and three (2.88%) Upper-Middle. When reporting annual family income, 23 (22.12%) participants indicated incomes of $0-$19,999, 27 (25.97%) indicated $20,000- $39,999, 23 (22.12%) indicated $40,000- $59,999, 15 (14.42%) indicated $60,000-$79,999, seven (6.73%) indicated $80,000 - $99,999, three (2.88%) indicated $100,000 - $119,999, two (1.92%) indicated $120,000 - $139,999, three (2.88%) indicated $140,000 - $159,999, one (.96%) indicated $160,000 - $179,999. To further measure participants’ subjective perceptions of their social status, they were asked to complete the Differential Status Identity Scale (DSIS;
Thompson & Subich, 2006, 2007). See Baseline Measures section below for the scale’s psychometric properties. Participants’ total scores ranged from -109.0 to 56.0 (out of a possible range between -120 and 120). The average participant total score was -44.63 ($SD = 29.65$). A total score of 0 indicates that a participant perceived themselves as having equal access to economic resources, power, and prestige as compared to the average U.S. citizen. This indicates that overall participants perceived themselves as having substantially lower social status (approximately 1.5 $SD$s) than the average U.S. citizen.

Sixty (57.69%) identified as first-generation college students and 98 (94.23%) reported attending college full-time. Participants represented different academic years: first (26.92%), second (22.12%), third (24.04%), fourth (21.15%), and fifth (5.77%). The average GPA score was 3.25 ($SD = 0.45$). Participants reported working an average of 10.91 ($SD = 9.15$) hours per week.

**Instruments**

The measures were presented to the participants in the following order. A baseline survey was administered prior to the start of participants’ tracking of daily mood and concealment experiences. Next, the daily measures were administered twice per day, at the same times each day, for 14 days. The morning surveys were open from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and the evening surveys were open from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight. Participants were reminded via email at 9:00 a.m. and at 9:00 p.m. to complete their morning and evening surveys, respectively. Every morning and every evening, participants’ mood was assessed. Each evening, participants completed a concealment report that captured the situational and behavioral characteristics of their concealment experiences that occurred during the day. These survey times were intended to accommodate participants’ varied daily schedules while capturing participants’ negative mood
prior to any class concealment and their “end of day” mood. Table 1 summarizes the schedule of data collection. All measures were distributed via Qualtrics, an online survey application.

Table 1.

Schedule of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Time 1: 6 am – 12 pm</th>
<th>Time 2: 6 pm – 12 am</th>
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<tr>
<td>0 (Pre)</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Negative Mood</td>
<td>Negative Concealment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perceived social status</td>
<td>Negative Mood</td>
<td>Negative Concealment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative Mood</td>
<td>Negative Concealment</td>
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<tr>
<td>…13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative Mood</td>
<td>Negative Concealment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (Post)</td>
<td>Debrief</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Baseline Measures

**Demographics questionnaire.** Demographic information pertaining to participants’ social identities such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social class, and income level were collected. See Appendix A for the items.

**Perceived social status.** The Differential Status Identity Scale (DSIS; Thompson & Subich, 2006, 2007) was used to measure participants’ perceptions of their social status. It consists of 60 items and three subscales measuring economic resources (30 items), social power (15 items), and social prestige (15 items). All items were rated on a 5-point scale between -2 (very much below average for the economic resources and social power subscales or much less for the social prestige subscale) and +2 (very much above average or much more). Mean subscale scores were used, with higher scores indicating greater perceived economic resources, social power, and social prestige.

The first 15 items of the economic resources subscale measures how participants perceive their ability to participate in activities that require economic resources as compared to the average U.S. citizen such as traveling recreationally, seeing a dentist, and providing their children with extra-curricular opportunities. The next 15 items measure participants’ access to
resources and amenities (e.g., “cars,” “savings,” and “amount of education”) relative to the average citizen. The social power subscale taps participants’ perceived level of social influence and control including their ability to “influence laws and regulations,” “receive a fair trial,” and work in a “high-profile position.” Last, the social power subscale assesses participants’ relative sense of being valued based on their group membership (e.g., “ethnic/racial group”), neighborhood, and abilities (e.g., “physical appearance”).

Initial validation of the DSIS has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including high internal consistency reliability within college student samples (alphas ranged from 0.92 to 0.98: Thompson & Subich, 2006, 2007; Metz, Fouad, & Ihle-Helledy, 2009). Exploratory factor analysis yielded a 4-factor structure: economic resources – basic needs, economic resources – amenities, social power, and social prestige (Thompson & Subich, 2007). For each of the four subscales, the total score ranged from -30 to 30, which corresponds to a total scale score between -120 and 120. To demonstrate convergent validity, the DSIS was found to be positively correlated with students’ self-reported social class and income levels (correlations ranged from 0.31 to 0.56: Thompson & Subich, 2006, 2007). Furthermore, criterion validity was established by significant score differences between African-American and Caucasian-American students in three subscales (economic resources – amenities, social power, and social prestige) after controlling for income (Thompson & Subich, 2007). Alpha for the DSIS in this sample was .96. See Appendix B for the DSIS.

**Daily Measures**

**Negative Mood (morning and evening).** The Profile of Mood States-15 (POMS-15; Cranford et al., 2006) was used to assess participants’ current moods related to anxiety, depression, anger, fatigue, and vigor (joy). It consists of five subscales, with three items each
(sample stems include “sad,” “hopeless,” and “discouraged” for “depressed” mood). Each item is rated on a 5-point scale between 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). A sample item is “At this moment, how sad do you feel?”. All items were transformed to a 1-5 scale for calculations. Higher subscale scores indicate higher levels of the corresponding mood state. Mean scores of the anxiety, depression, anger, and fatigue subscales, each ranging from 1 to 5, were used to reflect participants’ corresponding negative mood. As used in previous studies (e.g., Gregory, Glazer, & Berenson, 2017), a mean score of negative mood score, ranging from 1 to 5, were obtained using the mean scores of the anxiety, depression, anger, and fatigue subscales.

The POMS-15 was adapted from the revised Profile of Mood States (POMS; McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1992) for the purpose of developing a brief, yet robust mood scale for diary studies. Items for each mood subscale were selected because they yielded the highest factor loadings and were face valid (Cranford et al., 2006). The reliability coefficients for within-person change ranged from .75 to .88 across two nonclinical samples, indicating the measure’s moderate reliability in detecting mood changes within the same participant over repeated assessments (Cranford et al., 2006). Between-person reliability coefficients ranged from .58 to .87.

The POMS-15 has been previously used to assess participants’ mood in experience sampling studies across different samples including undergraduate students (Gregory et al., 2017) and chronic pain patients (Gerhart et al., 2017). A study of young adults yielded within- and between-person reliabilities that ranged from .66 to .83 and from .94 to .96 respectively (Haas, Schmid, Stadler, Reuter, & Gawrilow, 2017). Other studies have reported alphas between .83 and .96 for the negative mood subscales (Gerhart et al., 207; Gregory et al., 2017). Between-person reliabilities ranged from .66 to .86 and within-person reliabilities ranged from .72 to .83 for the negative mood subscales in this sample. See Appendix C for the POMS-15.
**Class concealment report (evening).** Every evening, participants were prompted with a set of open- and close-ended questions to obtain their descriptions of their class concealment events. These items were constructed by the author based on the review of questions posed to participants in qualitative studies on social class identity (e.g., Aries & Seider, 2005) and the questions used in daily diary studies related to other social phenomena (e.g., Brinkman et al. 2009, Swim et al., 2007). Specifically, these items assessed the situational characteristics of participants’ class concealment events (i.e., relationship to interaction partner(s) and their perceived social status, location, and precipitating events) and the behavioral nature of concealment (i.e., strategies used to conceal). Figure 2 delineates the sequence of questions presented to each participant based on their responses.

**Research Question 1: When do students conceal their social class identities?**

First, participants were asked whether they have experienced any events or interactions that made them think about their social class background (a). Participants who indicated “no” were routed to the end of the survey. Participants who indicated “yes” were asked whether they concealed or hid aspects of their social class background during any of these events or interactions (b). If participants indicated “no,” they were asked to describe the event that made them think about their social class background. Participants were able to enter up to three event descriptions. Participants who endorsed “yes” (to concealing or hiding) were asked to respond to the prompt: “describe the event that made you conceal or hide aspects of your social class” (c).
Figure 2. Flow of class concealment items presented to participants.

**Research Question 2: How do students conceal their social class identities?**

Next, participants were prompted with an open-ended question: “What did you do or say to conceal or hide aspects of your social class?” (d). Because no social class concealment measures exist, I created a single face-valid item to capture participants’ perceived level of effort in concealing their social class. Participants were asked to rate the following question using
Likert-type scale, “How much effort did you put in to conceal or hide your social class?” with response options ranging from 1 (A little) to 5 (A lot) (e).

**Research Question 3: Where and with whom do students conceal?**

Next, participants were asked to indicate where the event occurred using these options: classroom, dorm or housing, other on-campus location (please specify), and other off-campus location (please specify) (f). Then, they were asked to identify their relationship with their interaction partner(s) using the options: friend, roommate, instructor/professor, group (participants to specify), and others (participants to specify) (g). Additionally, they were asked to rate their partners’ social statuses relative to theirs using a Likert-type scale ranging from -2 (very much lower) to -2 (very much higher) (h).

Finally, participants were asked whether there was a different event that made them think about their social class background (i). Participants who indicated “no” were routed to the end of the survey. Participants who indicated “yes” were routed to the preliminary question regarding concealment (b), up to a total of three events. See Appendix D for the items.

**Procedure**

**Recruitment.** Following IRB approval, the research team comprised of the author and two undergraduate research assistants, recruited participants during the academic semesters between September 2018 and May 2019 at a 4-year university in the U.S. Midwest. Recruitment included broad (e.g., posting flyers, contacting academic departments to share study information, and advertising study via campus job portal and publicly available emails) and targeted (e.g., contacting campus offices and organizations that served underrepresented students) efforts to reach students who identified as low-income. All recruitment materials listed the eligibility criteria for participation (i.e., an undergraduate student aged 18 years or older who self-identified
as low-income with daily access to the Internet and email). Furthermore, all written materials emphasized the study’s targeted sample of low-income college students (e.g., “low-income college student” printed in large font on flyers). The research team also articulated the same set of eligibility criteria when verbally communicating about the study to students and staff (e.g., during student organization meetings). To boost recruitment, participants also were asked to share the study opportunity with their social networks who met study criteria (e.g., friends) if they felt comfortable doing so.

**Eligibility verification.** After providing informed consent, each participant was required to verify that they met the study inclusion criteria: a) self-identified as low-income; b) attended the institution as an undergraduate student; c) was at least 18 years old; d) had daily access to the Internet and email; and e) was available to complete surveys every morning and evening for 14 days. The author verified that all participants in this sample indicated “Yes” to each eligibility item in the Qualtrics eligibility survey prior to contacting them to schedule an orientation.

**In-person orientation training.** Following eligibility verification, participants completed the baseline measures via Qualtrics and were scheduled for an in-person orientation to the study. Participants attended a 30-minute orientation to become acquainted with the study’s goals, and to obtain hands-on experience with recording their responses via Qualtrics. Up to four sessions were conducted per week, with each session attended by one to five participants. The goals of the orientation were to build researcher-participant alliance and to equip participants with pertinent information to participate actively in the study. Each session was led by a member of the research team; undergraduate researchers were trained by the author and had observed at least two sessions prior to leading sessions independently. See Appendix E for the orientation script.
First, participants were informed of the study’s purpose, which was to better understand low-income students’ daily experiences with social class events including attempts to hide their social class identities, and whether these events are related to their mood. To build alliance, researchers briefly shared information regarding their social class background and experiences, and how they were connected to their interest in this project. Regarding logistics, participants were informed of the reimbursement structure and schedule, opening and closing times for surveys, forthcoming email reminders (including follow-up emails if participants missed a survey), and contact information for the research team. Next, participants were asked to list their expected times of filling out the morning and evening surveys (in consideration of survey availability), to brainstorm potential barriers to survey completion (e.g., when someone initiates conversation with participants while filling out the survey), and to troubleshoot ways to address these barriers (e.g., identify conducive locations or times).

To help participants identify their class concealment experiences, participants were asked to describe how they personally defined social class background. The study’s definition of class identity as a “rich system of cultural expectations, manners, customs, and social norms” grounded a person’s economic status (Kraus & Stephens, 2012, p. 649) was highlighted. Next, participants were asked to reflect on a time they hid their class background. To simulate an experience of completing class concealment report, researchers demonstrated their completion of a mock report via Qualtrics that included the same set of items presented to participants, i.e., items (a) to (i). For example, researchers indicated yes to items (a) (“Have you experienced any events or interactions that made you think about your social class background?”) and (b) (“Did you conceal or hide aspects of their social class background during any event or interaction?”) to document an example of their concealment experiences. Participants were encouraged to track
all events daily regardless of their similarity with previously tracked events. Participants were also asked to reflect on a time they had any thoughts or desires of wanting to hide their class background but did not do so. Using another mock report on Qualtrics, researchers demonstrated their completion of items (a) and (b) again, by indicating “no” to item (b), which prompted them to describe a sample event that made them think about their social class. A handout containing pertinent information (e.g., definitions of terms; see Appendix F) was provided to participants during the orientation.

To summarize, the training provided pertinent information, helped participants plan for times to complete the surveys and anticipate difficulties with reporting, and helped participants identify and report their class concealment events via Qualtrics. Participants were also encouraged to contact the author/lead researcher via email with any issues or questions that emerged.

**Response-tracking.** On a daily basis, participants were automatically emailed a reminder at 9:00 a.m. to record their mood and at 9:00 p.m. to record their mood and concealment events for a period of 14 days. Each email contained a user-specific link to Qualtrics, which allows them to record their responses.

**Retention and reimbursement.** To encourage retention and engagement, researchers contacted participants as needed (e.g., when participants missed subsequent surveys) to encourage them to complete surveys in a timely manner and to offer to respond to any questions/concerns (a practice adapted from Hektner et al., 2007). Researchers using intensive sampling designs have noted the importance of reimbursing participants adequately to promote engagement and retention (e.g., Zirkel et al., 2015). As such, participants received $1 per day for completing both of the morning and evening surveys, and $3 as a bonus for completing all
surveys for the week. A bonus of $5 was given to participants who completed all surveys for two weeks. Thus, participants who completed all surveys for the first week received $10 and those who completed all surveys for two weeks received $25 in total. Participants were paid after all surveys were administered. During payment, participants were asked for feedback on their experiences and if they wished to stay informed of findings that emerged (see Appendix G for the debrief script).

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

Data analysis. Sandelowski’s (2000) fundamental qualitative description method was used to analyze the qualitative data via a “straight description of phenomena” by systematically identifying and presenting patterns from the data in an unadorned manner (p. 334). Because it draws from principles of natural inquiry (i.e., studying phenomena in or close to its natural state), it reduces the need for substantial abstraction or theorizing from its data and is recommended to address research questions regarding the “who, what, and where” (p. 339) of events of interest. With respect to the study, this approach was well-suited since its purpose was to identify patterns of how participants concealed their social class backgrounds and identities as well as themes of events that preceded their concealment. In other words, the qualitative data gathered in this study were intended to provide a description of the everyday concealment practices used by students. Importantly, Sandelowski (2000) cautioned against the excessive use of interpretation and abstraction during the coding process for data that are intended to provide a clear description of the phenomenon. Since participants provided brief responses through their daily reports, “dense” data are not available for substantial abstraction or theorizing.
The coding strategy followed the guidelines of inductive content analysis as stipulated by Elo and Kyngä (2007). The three main stages were preparation, organizing, and reporting. Coding was performed by two analysts, the author and one undergraduate research team member and an audit of the results was conducted by the author’s advisor, a faculty member with research expertise in social class issues. The author trained her fellow analyst on the main coding stages using didactic material (e.g., reading the article on coding strategy) and practice (e.g., coding entries of a different set of social class events). Prior to coding, both analysts also discussed their social positions, beliefs, and experiences that may contribute to their interpretations of the data (see Subjectivity section below) and these were documented for reference during subsequent stages. During the preparation phase, decisions about the unit (e.g., each reported concealment event) and scope of analysis (i.e., what content to include during coding) were made. Both analysts became “immersed” in the data by independently reading the texts multiple times and deciphering preliminary ideas of what may be transpiring from the data as a whole. Each analyst documented their overall reactions or observations separately, and discussed and documented them for reference.

Next, we organized the data via open coding, categorization, and abstraction. Open coding referred to the process of writing notes and generating statements that corresponded to each entry reviewed. Here, we independently coded participants’ descriptions of situations that prompted class concealment and their concealment strategies into headings, which were brief statements that summarized the main points expressed. During this process, we adhered to Sandelowski’s (2000) approach of minimizing abstraction to ensure that statements remained “close” to the original data. All headings were collected and were individually reviewed by both
analysts in-person to check for consensus. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved when both analysts agreed upon their headings.

The next phase, categorization referred to the process of reducing the number of categories into higher order categories by clustering codes that “belong” together. During this categorization process, analysts first separately generated potential categories based on their understanding of the data and assigned it to each heading. Next, both analysts met to review each heading and their pre-generated category to discuss their thematic fit. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved when both analysts came to consensus. The categories were updated (or headings were rearranged) continuously in an iterative manner as our review proceeded. Last, abstraction referred to the process of streamlining categories to provide an overarching of the phenomenon of interest. Together, the analysts collapsed the final categories into higher order categories where appropriate.

To ensure trustworthiness, both analysts consistently returned to all components of the original data to gain a clearer understanding of the context when resolving discrepancies during the open coding and categorization stages. For example, to clarify the intent of a participant’s concealment strategy, the analysts revisited the participant’s description of the situation that prompted concealment for more contextual information. Analysts also revisited their biases/assumptions to identify how they may have influenced our interpretations and coding/categorization and when resolving discrepancies. To minimize the author’s undue influence on her fellow analyst (given power differential), the author invited her fellow analyst to first share her observations and thoughts during discussions, particularly when addressing discrepancies. An audit was performed by the author’s advisor/dissertation chair, a faculty member with research expertise in social class issues, for triangulation to further attest to the
trustworthiness of the results (Elo & Kyngä, 2007). Revisions from the audit were primarily focused on altering category labels to maintain neutrality and to further streamline higher order categories to minimize overlap. The frequencies of categories and their headings were presented to assess whether certain characteristics of social situations (e.g., specific relationships with interaction partners, locations, nature of the social event) were more likely to prompt concealment.

**Subjectivity of researchers.** As the author, I acknowledge that my political beliefs and experiences from my social position as a queer, Southeast Asian, cisgender woman who was raised in a household with working-class roots may have shaped my interpretations and descriptions of the qualitative data. I am influenced by standpoint theory, which posits that knowledge and truth are molded by the individual’s social and political experiences (Hawkesworth, 2006). Thus, I assume that the participants’ descriptions of their experiences reflected their “truths” based on their social positions. My primary biases include my beliefs that the experiences possessed by individuals in subordinate positions wield less power in society and that social class is an ever-present element in people’s lives. Thus, I have a strong desire to advocate for the greater visibility of class-related concerns as experienced by individuals with lower social status. Given that I hold stigmatized identities that are invisible (e.g., being queer), there is a potential that I may overly align or empathize with participants’ class concealment descriptions that may be similar to my personal concealment experiences.

My fellow analyst identified as a White, upper-middle class, heterosexual cisgender woman. Given her lived experiences as a person with several dominant social identities, she reflected on her potential bias that the interaction partners present during participants’ concealment events may neither have been aware of their roles nor intended to do any harm.
Thus she noted that her interpretations may be appear more neutral with respect to identifying the triggers of class concealment. The potential impact of our assumptions and biases were discussed throughout our coding process, particularly when discrepancies emerged.

**Quantitative Analysis**

While the study’s hypotheses pertained to within-person links between negative mood and concealment effort, these relationships may also exist at the between-person level (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010). Thus, two-level multilevel regression models were used to determine potential links between negative mood and concealment effort (Snijders & Boskers, 2011). At the within-person level, the predictors of interest were morning negative mood (H1) and daily concealment effort (H2). To disentangle and assess whether between-person links also existed, person-level means of both predictors (i.e., mean morning negative mood and mean concealment effort) were created and entered in subsequent models for fit comparison. Control variables included the day of participation (1 = first day, 2 = second day, etc.) and a binary weekend indicator (0 = weekday, 1 = weekend). All time-varying predictors were person-centered as recommended by Wang and Maxwell (2015) because it allowed for disaggregation of between- and within-person effects.

First, exploratory analyses of the main variables were conducted to understand their distributions and interrelationships. A visual inspection of the distributions of variable scores (plotted at level-1) indicated that the scores were positively skewed for morning and evening negative mood, which may have reflected the overall psychological health of the sample (i.e., non-clinical sample). Similarly, daily concealment effort scores were positively skewed. Negative mood scores appeared lower on weekends as compared to weekdays, and concealment effort appeared higher on weekends. Scores were transformed by applying the binary logarithm
(i.e., log₂) to assess if this would reduce skewness and improve model fits. Because there were no substantial differences in model fits or results between the original and transformed values, original values were reported to improve readability and ease of interpretation.

Second, models were specified to include fixed and random effects based on theoretical predictions. In the event that a participant reported more than one concealment event per day, the event with the highest rated degree of concealment was treated as the concealment variable (as predictor or outcome) for that day. Third, parameter estimates for each model was obtained using full maximum likelihood estimation. Fourth, models were compared using Akaike and Bayesian information criteria, and deviance tests prior to selection. To test the study’s hypotheses, the best-fitting models and the significance of their fixed effect estimates were interpreted. All analyses were performed using the R software (R Core Team, 2019).
CHAPTER IV

Results

Results from the preliminary quantitative analysis are first presented to overview the prevalence of social class concealment events in this sample. Next, results from the qualitative analysis are presented in order of the research questions. Last, results from the multilevel models used to test the hypotheses are reported.

Quantitative Analysis

Sample Size

The determination of statistical power for multilevel models are influenced by several factors, including the sample size, estimated intraclass coefficients (ICC) and effect sizes, and the number of observations per participant (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013). At present, there is limited guidance available to assist researchers in determining the number of participants and sampling frequency needed to achieve adequate statistical power for studies using multilevel data, including daily diary designs. Furthermore, given the limited quantitative research available on social class concealment, it is challenging to estimate the sampling frequency and effect sizes particular to this phenomenon. However, previous daily diary and experience sampling studies on stigma concealment have yielded significant results using sample sizes ranging from 61 to 86 participants and sampling periods between 11 and 21 days (Beals et al., 2009; Frable et al., 1998; King et al., 2017). Therefore, this current 14-day study of 104 students who identified as low-income may be sufficient to detect multilevel relationships between negative mood and class concealment effort.

Missing Data
In total, there were 14 possible morning surveys and 14 possible evening surveys per participant. The mean numbers of morning and evening surveys completed per participant were 12.31 ($SD = 2.61$) and 12.38 ($SD = 2.27$), respectively.

A total of 1,280 morning and 1,287 evening data points were obtained. For a distribution of missing data, see Table 4.6. Overall, 12.09% of morning data and 11.61% of evening data points were not completed or missed by participants. Missingness was highest on weekends (days 6, 7, 13, and 14), ranging between 15.87% to 22.6% of combined morning and evening data. No imputation of missing data was conducted given challenges in reliably predicting mood states for any given participant on a particular morning or evening or for predicting whether social class concealment occurred on a given day. Instead, missing data were handled using full information maximum likelihood estimation as implemented in the lme4 package (Bates, Maechler, Bolker, & Walker, 2015) in R (R Core Team, 2019). Under this method, each parameter estimate (i.e., coefficient) reflects the value of the parameter that makes the available data most likely to have been observed.

Table 4.1

*Summary of Missing Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>No. of Surveys Missing</th>
<th>Frequency (daily)</th>
<th>Percentage (daily)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Evening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Analyses

At least one social class concealment event was endorsed on 133 evening surveys, indicating that class concealment occurred for 10.33% of the total number of surveyed days across all participants. Out of a total of 104 participants, 63 (60.58%) endorsed at least one concealment event over the period of 14 days. The average number of concealment events per person was 1.28 over 14 days. As shown in Figure 4.2 below, the total number of concealment events reported ranged from zero to seven. Among those who concealed, the majority (n = 32) of participants reported one event across 14 days.

![Distribution of participants across no. of concealment events](image)

**Figure 4.1.** Bar graph of participant distribution across total numbers of concealment events.
For the distribution of total concealment events reported across all days of participation, see Figure 4.2 below.

![Distribution of concealment events across days](image)

**Figure 4.2.** Bar graph of concealment event distribution across days of participation.

Concealment effort for days in which participants did not endorse any concealment was coded as ‘0’ to indicate that no effort was used. On days when concealment was indicated, participants rated their effort between 1 (*A little*) and 5 (*A lot*). Thus, concealment effort endorsed on any day of participation ranged from 0 (*None*) to 5 (*A lot*). The average concealment effort for the total sample (including those who did not report a concealment event) was 0.22 (*SD* = 0.75). This suggests that on average, a participant expended close to zero effort concealing their social class background on any given day.

On any given day, participants’ morning and evening negative mood ranged between 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). On average, a participant endorsed ‘a little’ negative mood on any morning (*M* = 1.68, *SD* = 0.66). Similarly, a participant reported experiencing a low level of negative mood in the evening (*M* = 1.76, *SD* = 0.71). See Table 4.2 for a summary of descriptive statistics for these day-level (level-1) variables.
Next, person-level (level-2) variables were created for the predictors of interest, morning negative mood and concealment effort. That is, mean scores of morning negative mood and concealment effort were calculated for each participant. Mean morning negative mood scores ranged between 1.06 and 3.90 ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.52$), whereas mean concealment effort scores ranged between 0 and 1.21 ($M = 0.23$, $SD = 0.29$). This indicates that the average participant experienced ‘a little’ negative mood across mornings and expended negligible effort in concealing their social class backgrounds across days of participation. See Table 4.2 for a summary of descriptive statistics for these person-level (level-2) variables.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Possible Range</th>
<th>Observed Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level-1 variables (Days = 1390)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning negative mood</td>
<td>[1, 5]</td>
<td>[1, 5]</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening negative mood</td>
<td>[1, 5]</td>
<td>[1, 5]</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealment effort</td>
<td>[0, 5]</td>
<td>[0, 5]</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level-2 variables (Participants = 104)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean morning negative mood</td>
<td>[1, 5]</td>
<td>[1.06, 3.90]</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean concealment effort</td>
<td>[0, 5]</td>
<td>[0, 1.21]</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, within- and between-person correlational analyses were run between variables of interest to examine the strengths of their relationships. At the within-person level (i.e., level 1), morning negative mood was significantly correlated with evening negative mood ($r = .30$, $p < .001$) but not with daily concealment effort ($r = -.04$, $p = .18$). Daily concealment effort and evening negative mood were not significantly correlated ($r = .01$, $p = .64$). This indicated that within a day for a given participant, their morning negative mood was positively linked with their evening negative mood such that a higher morning score predicted a higher evening score.
However, within the same day, neither morning nor evening negative mood was linked with their concealment effort.

At the between-person level (i.e., level 2), morning negative mood was significantly correlated with concealment effort ($r = .27, p < .05$) and evening negative mood ($r = .93, p < .001$). Concealment effort was also correlated with evening negative mood ($r = .29, p < .01$). This indicated that overall, participants with higher morning negative mood endorsed greater concealment effort. Higher morning negative mood also corresponded to higher evening negative mood across participants. Concealment effort was also positively linked with evening negative mood such that higher effort predicted greater negative mood. Results of these correlational analyses are summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Morning negative mood</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>−.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evening negative mood</td>
<td>.93***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Concealment effort</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Within-person correlations are above the diagonal and between-person correlations are below the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) were obtained to assess the degree to which observed data were explained by their clustering within a person. For the outcomes of interest, daily concealment effort and evening negative mood, their ICCs were calculated by running empty random intercept models for each variable. The ICCs reflect the percentage of variance accounted for by individual differences (i.e., between-person variance divided by total variance estimated). Higher values indicate greater variation as explained by differences between
participants (i.e., individual differences). The ICCs were .0676 for daily concealment effort and .490 for evening negative mood, indicating that 6.76% of variability in concealment effort and 49.0% of variability in negative mood scores were due to differences between participants. Participant differences only accounted for a low percentage of variance in daily concealment effort scores, which is likely due to the low variability in the overall average concealment effort scores (between 0 and 1.21) as discussed above. In contrast, approximately half of variability in evening negative mood scores were due to systematic differences between participants. Overall, these ICC scores confirm the nested nature of the data that can be addressed using statistical treatment such as hierarchical or multilevel linear modeling for hypothesis testing.

**Qualitative Results**

**RQ1: When, Where, and With Whom do SLI Conceal Their Social Class Identities?**

**When do students conceal their social class identities?**

Participants described a wide range of situations that prompted them to conceal their social class information. These event descriptions are summarized under the following categories, ordered from most to least prevalent: 1) social pressures during interactions; 2) threats of disclosure; 3) financial concerns related to college and daily living; and 4) encounters of privilege and classism. These precipitating events activated students’ concealment of personal information that may have signaled their social class statuses.

**Routine social pressures.** The first category is routine social pressures. This category represents the pressures and dilemmas that participants faced during social interactions on whether (or how) to share their class-related information with others. In total, there were 48 occasions in which 36 participants reported situations of concealment that fit under the three related themes in this category.
The first theme in this category is social invitations. There were 25 instances in which 20 participants were invited to social events or activities that they perceived to be costly. In response, they faced decisions on whether to accept or decline invitations from their friends, coworkers, or acquaintances while considering the financial implications. Specifically, students fielded invitations to meals, festivals, and trips that would require both time and money. For instance, a 21-year-old, White, working-class straight ciswoman shared this example:

I got invited to a Christmas gift "grab bag" event. The event requires you to give an item that is $30... Then you pick one out, but you don't know what you will get. I really wanted to go to this event because my friends will be there and there will be food and drinks. But I decided $30 is a lot to spend and I could not afford that, especially on something I might not want.

As another example, a 19-year-old, Asian/Asian-American/Pacific Islander working-class bisexual ciswoman shared an instance in which she was invited by a friend to have dinner but declined because “I cannot afford one meal in that restaurant.”

The second theme is concerns of affordability. There were 16 occasions in which 13 participants reported moments that raised their concerns about the affordability of certain items or experiences when engaging in social events. For example, a 21-year-old, White working-class bisexual cisman stated, “My friends wanted to get another round of drinks but I was worried about the cost.” Participants also expressed feeling pressured to join with others, as noted by a 21-year-old White lower-middle class straight student who wrote that she spent money because her “friends were online clothes shopping and I bought something I shouldn’t have but did because everyone else was.”
The third theme is emergence of social class-related topics. There were seven instances in which seven participants reported concealing their class information when topics related to social class arose in their conversations with others. These topics included work, travel, and career goals. For example, when a 22-year-old White first-generation college student learned that her classmate “was going to be getting a brand-new car when I knew I was most likely thinking about getting an old used car,” she responded to her friends that “I would be getting a new car too.” Another participant, a 21-year-old White male first-generation college student reported that he “did not say anything” when “a TA asked if anyone went anywhere fantastic during [spring] break.”

In summary, these themes reflect the routine pressures that emerge when participants engage socially with others. Together, they capture the different ways in which social participation can activate questions for participants about how or whether to engage with others while managing their social class information.

**Threats of disclosure.** The second category is threats of disclosure. This category represents incidents in which participants were prompted to conceal their class identities because of the potential to be “outed” as having low-income, lower, or working-class backgrounds if their personal details were divulged. In total, there were 32 instances in which 24 participants reported situations that fit under the two themes in this category.

The first theme is personal questions. There were 19 instances in which 16 participants recounted being asked targeted questions about their history (e.g., past experiences), backgrounds (e.g., family), and interests (e.g., habits). These questions were posed in different contexts, including casual conversations with friends or coworkers and job interviews. For
example, a 22-year-old Asian working-class international college student wrote that he lied about the “free foods” he obtained from campus when:

I encountered my friends... they asked me about the huge bag I was carrying... I lied to them that inside the bag were the foods I [bought] from a supermarket. They further asked me which supermarket I go to, I thought for a while and told them [that] I forgot.

A 21-year-old White bisexual student who identified as lower-class said “I disguised my socioeconomic status” by “not disclosing much about my past other than my brother’s incarcerations” when asked about her interest in working with at-risk youth by a prospective employer.

The second theme is concerns about image. Within this theme, there were 13 instances in which 11 participants described worrying about how they appeared to others, which prompted them to conceal symbols of their class identities. These concerns pertained to participants’ physical (e.g., dress) and nonmaterial signs of social status (e.g., actions that convey social status). For example, participants shared concerns of being seen with dated technology and “worn” or “out of style” clothing. A 19-year-old White lower-class first-generation college student described it in this way:

I was going down to the dining hall to get lunch and watch a show on my phone.

However, I was very embarrassed to be walking around with headphones that had a cord.

A lot of people on campus have wireless headphones, and I have heard people make fun of those who don't in the past.

Other reported concerns included a fear of negative judgment from others if participants were seen engaging in activities that indicated financial instability or frugality. For example, a 18-year-old White bisexual working-class student wrote:
I basically just didn't want anyone to see me at the [clothing swap] event. It was basically an event where you bring old clothes and then trade them for other clothes that other people didn't want. It's an event that a lot of people go to, but I didn't want some of my friends to see me there because I knew they would judge me...

In summary, personal questions and concerns about appearance posed risks of being known or seen as having lower social statuses. Subsequently, these situations prompted participants to conceal their social class information.

**Financial concerns.** The third category is financial concerns. This category reflects situations that activated participants’ thoughts or worries about their finances, which prompted them to conceal their class information. In total, there were 29 occasions in which 19 participants described situations that fit under the two themes in this category.

The first theme is cost of college. Within this theme, there were 16 incidents during which 13 participants described situations that activated their worries about the cost of tuition, student loans, school supplies, and enrichment activities. For example, a 19-year-old Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ lower-class first-generation student shared:

> During my design class, my teacher made a comment about having to buy more supplies for a project I was working on and I had to invest my money on more supplies when I planned on saving it for future groceries.

She indicated that she did not share these concerns aloud to her teacher or class.

Another manifestation of financial concerns related to extra learning activities associated with college. Specifically, students shared instances in which they were presented with cost-prohibitive study abroad and fieldwork opportunities by their advisors and friends, which elicited
concealment. For example, a 22-year-old White lower-class student indicated that following a
guest speaker’s presentation on an internship opportunity:

   My classmates chatted with me about what kinds of policy-related internship
opportunities they could pursue in [Washington] D.C. and when they asked me what I
might apply for, I pretended to be considering a legislative internship... I knew perfectly
well I could never afford the airfare to travel to and from D.C., as well as the living
expenses there.

The second theme is daily expenses. There were 13 instances in which 11 participants
reported situations that activated their concerns around their costs of living. Situations within this
theme prompted financial decisions and actions that included concealment of one’s social class
information. For example, a 19-year-old multiracial working-class genderqueer student shared:

   I was buying some drinks at a grocery store. Beforehand, I checked to see how much was
left in my account. When I went to check out, the drinks were more expensive than I
thought so... I quickly transferred money into my savings without any explanation or eye
contact. I paid and left quickly. I felt kind of ashamed.

A 21-year-old multiracial bisexual lower-class student noted that she tried to convince her friend
to take a cheaper mode of public transportation by “pushing as if it's simply logistic[al] (e.g.,
saves time) when I really wanted to save 17 dollars...” Participants also recounted experiencing
financial concerns surrounding their healthcare coverage. For example, a 24-year-old White
pansexual working-class first-generation college student noted that she concealed her emotional
distress when she realized she could not get new glasses.

   In summary, financial concerns related to college and daily living activated worry and
cautions among participants. As they determined their next steps, these situations prompted
participants to conceal the severity or impact of these worries so as to not disclose information about their economic status.

**Encounters of privilege and classism.** The fourth category is encounters of privilege and classism. This category reflects participants’ description of events during which others were perceived as exhibiting or perpetuating privilege and classism. In these instances, participants were prompted to consider and compare their social statuses with others. In total, there were 24 instances in which 23 participants reported situations that fit under three themes in this category.

The first theme is witnessing others’ material affordances. There were 10 occasions during which 10 participants reported concealing their class information when they witnessed others afford purchases and activities that were beyond their financial means. Some participants felt disconnected from peers who possessed different levels of financial power. This sentiment was shared by an 18-year-old middle class international student who said:

> My roommate has been doing Halloween shopping since a few weeks ago... I'm not so interested in Halloween but even if I wanted to celebrate it, I couldn't because I don't have the money to purchase a costume, and certainly not enough time to make something myself. I don't like feeling left out.

Other instances included learning about peers’ access to luxurious activities (e.g., travel). For example, a 23-year-old White first-generation cisman noted that while his peers were “discussing spring break vacations to interesting locations, I spent my break trying to afford groceries.”

The second theme is others’ lack of class awareness. There were eight instances in which seven participants reported concealing their class information in response to others’ displays of limited awareness of their privilege or class issues. For example, a 20-year-old multiracial upper-middle class student recounted, “My friend was telling me about her grandma always buying her
presents from the dollar store, and complaining about the presents being bad.” This prompted her not to disclose that she also shopped at the budget store. In another instance, a 19-year-old Hispanic/Latino/Chicano undocumented first-generation student shared his response to a friend’s limited awareness of his privilege:

One of my friends was talking about the internships he was applying to, and how he was leaving out of town tomorrow to do an interview for an internship at [organization] (he was being flown out by them). He seemed a bit annoyed about having to leave town, as he said that there are better options... and how this is one of his last choices, despite it being a good job opportunity... I stayed quiet and did not contribute to the conversation. I am an undocumented student and cannot apply for paid internships here, and so hearing my friend dismiss something as important... made me uncomfortable because it made me wish that I could be in his position.

The third theme is perceptions of prejudicial treatment. Within this theme, there were six occasions in which six participants described perceiving themselves as treated in a prejudicial manner because of their race and ethnicity. For example, a 20-year-old Hispanic/Latina/Chicana first-generation student described lowering her voice when “I went to painting class with my Latina friends and was speaking in Spanglish with an accent and I noticed people staring at me.” Another participant, a 22-year-old Hispanic/Latina/Chicana working-class ciswoman wrote that when a customer was upset with a return policy at their workplace:

She told me, before she left, that she will not accept this policy and there will be many more complaints from her, and the way she looked at me... [seemed] kind of a racist way of saying she is going to complain every time I attend to her at the store...
This participant questioned if she was treated differently by the customer due to “being Latina as my social background.” These accounts suggested that some participants of color perceived themselves as being treated differently by others because of their diminished social status as a member of a minority racial/ethnic group.

In summary, participants were prompted to conceal their class information when they encountered others’ displays of privilege, lack of class awareness, and prejudicial treatment. Participants who identified as racial/ethnic minorities shared their experiences of racism as social class-related experiences, which reflects interconnections between their perceived racial and social class identities. For a summary of all categories, their associated themes, and frequency of occurrence, see Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Summary of Categories and Themes of Situations that Prompted Concealment, and their Frequency of Occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentage occurrence of category and theme of all occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Routine social pressures</td>
<td>Social invitations</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns of affordability</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emergence of class topics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats of disclosure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal questions</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image concerns</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of college</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily expenses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where and with whom do students conceal their social class identities?

**Locations.** Participants reported concealing their social class identities in a number of different types of places. Out of a total of 133 concealment events, participants identified specific locations for 130 of these observations (i.e., locations were missing for three events). Out of a total of 130 events, the majority of these instances (73, 56.2% of all locations) occurred on campus. This included classrooms, academic buildings, dormitories/housing, public areas, and student services. On-campus locations that were most frequently cited were: classroom (21 out of 73 events) and housing (15 out of 73 events). When categorizing the locations, the categories identified in the aforementioned section also were analyzed to examine the most common types of situations that prompted concealment in these respective places.

In the classroom, participants encountered all situational categories: a) encountering privilege or classism; b) financial concerns; c) routine social pressures; and d) threats of disclosure. For example, a White lower-class man lied to his instructor about not having had the opportunity to buy school supplies. He said, “I had to turn in an exam today that was meant to be done on Engineering paper (I used regular notebook paper), I didn't buy any because I don't buy anything unnecessary out of budget concerns.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encounters of privilege and classism</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>18.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others’ material affordances</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of class awareness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudicial treatment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In dormitories, participants reported facing routine social pressures and reminders of others’ privilege in 10 (out of 15) instances, which prompted them to conceal their class information. A White queer first-generation college student noted:

I was Skyping my best friend with my girlfriend, and my best friend mentioned that he was going to be going to London over spring break because two of his friends are going to be [sic] studying abroad next semester and he wants to visit. He then asked a friend in the same room as him how much a plane ticket was. For him, money is not a barrier to making [sic] such decisions. I lied and said that I might be going to New York...

Participants also reported concealing their class identities in places off campus on 57 occasions (43.9% of all locations). These places included public areas, restaurants, housing, and online platforms. Locations that were frequently cited included: public spaces or services (14 out of 57 incidents) and online platforms (8 out of 57 incidents).

In community spaces or services, participants experienced threats of disclosure and routine social pressures on nine (out of 14) occasions. For example, a working-class international student noted that she lied about her shopping plans in order to fit in when “I went to the bank and the clerk asked me, did I plan to buy something for [sic] Black Friday.” Another participant, a 25-year-old White working-class first-generation cisman shared:

My boss asked if I could buy us coffee before our meeting. I lied and said I forgot my [sic] debit card at home and couldn’t pick anything up when in reality I just didn’t have any money in general to buy it.

On virtual platforms such as mobile phones and social media, participants shared that they experienced routine social pressures in six (out of eight) instances, which prompted them to conceal. For example, a White bisexual lower-middle class man shared the following while
communicating with his friend over mobile texts: “My friend is planning to visit me this weekend and says she wants me to show her a good restaurant to eat. I did not want to tell her that I am low on income, so I agreed.”

In summary, while class concealment occurred in various locations, the majority of concealment events took place on-campus, and most frequently in the classroom. With respect to off-campus locations, the majority of events took place in public spaces or services. For more details on the breakdown of locations and their frequencies, see Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

*Summary of Concealment Locations and their Frequency of Occurrences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage occurrence of location of all occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-campus locations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Classroom</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dorm/On-campus housing**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other, including:</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/community spaces</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and health services</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic buildings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-campus locations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Public spaces/services (e.g., bank)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Restaurants</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Housing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Online (e.g., social media)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Health and wellness services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Workplace</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Social events</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *Locations were missing for three out of 133 observations.*

**This location category may include off-campus housing options given that the item presented to participants was “Dorm/Housing.”*
**Audience.** Participants concealed their class information from individuals with whom they had different relationships. Out of a total of 133 concealment events, participants reported interaction partner information for 131 of these observations (i.e., partner information was missing for two events). Out of a total 131 observations, the majority of concealment events (107, 82.7% of all partners) occurred in the presence of single interaction partners. These partners included: friends and peers; customer service representatives; instructors/faculty members; and others. When categorizing interaction partners, the situational categories also were analyzed to examine the most common situations that prompted concealment based on relationship type.

Friends and peers (which included friends, classmates, and roommates) were the most frequently (80 out of 107 events) listed interaction partners. Among friends, participants most frequently encountered routine social pressures (25 out of 80 events) and threats of disclosure (13 out of 80 events). For example, a 21-year-old working-class cisman shared this about their interaction with a friend:

I was talking to someone who was super surprised that I didn't have my driver’s license and they wouldn't move past it... At first, I just said I didn't like driving which is true but not the whole story. So I had to say that I couldn't afford a car even if I did so there was no point in getting it.

Among roommates and classmates, participants most commonly (8 out of 13 and 5 out of 14 events respectively) reported experiencing similar social pressures. Among classmates, a 21-year-old Hispanic/Latina/Chicana bisexual working-class ciswoman shared:

I was out studying with [a classmate] and they were talking about ordering [food]... I was nervous because I didn't think I had the money for that. I didn't say anything, I was just quiet until I figured out what I could do.
With respect to instructors or faculty members, participants most commonly concealed their concerns related to financing college (3 out of 5 events). For example, a White lower-class student stated:

A teacher asked me to talk about information that was in our book (which I didn't buy) and I told them I did not have the book on me... I never buy books unless I absolutely have to so needless to say I didn't buy this one either.

In the remaining 24 (18.3%) concealment events, groups of interaction partners were identified. Similar to individual partners, most of these interaction groups were comprised of friends and peers (10 out of 24 events) and classmates (7 out of 24 events). For example, a 19-year-old working-class international student shared that in anticipation of meeting peers, “I found my sneakers to be [sic] dirty and old-fashioned, because I wore it for more than 5 years... I changed [my] sneakers and wore boots instead.”

Other groups of interaction partners included roommates (2 out of 24 events), coworkers (2 out of 24 events) and other combinations of individuals (e.g., family of significant other; 3 out of 24 events). In the presence of her romantic partner’s family, a 21-year-old White lower-class first-generation student reported that, “I had attended a wedding for a member of my boyfriend’s family. I did dress up quite a bit but I felt out of place for a lot of it.” See Table 4.6 for the types of interaction partners listed and their frequencies.

Table 4.6

Summary of Interaction Partner Types and their Frequency of Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction partner(s) type</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage occurrence of interaction partner type of all occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Friends and peers 80 61.1
   - Friend 52 39.1
   - Roommate 13 9.8
   - Classmate 15 11.3
2. Supervisors/coworkers 8 6.1
3. Customer service (e.g., cashier) 6 4.6
4. Instructor/faculty 5 3.8
5. Others (e.g., significant others) 8 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>18.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Friends and peers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Classmates</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Roommates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coworkers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Others (e.g., family of significant other)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Total 131* 100.0

*Interaction partner information was missing for two out of 133 observations.

**Interaction Partner Social Status.** With respect to social status, participants mostly rated their interaction partner that prompted the concealment event as having “higher” or “very much higher” status relative to participants (102 out of 133 partners). Among partners rated as having “very much higher” status (21 partners), participants concealed their social class information under two situational categories: encountering others’ privilege and experiencing social pressures. For example, a Hispanic/Latina/Chicana first-generation college student shared:

My [sic] and my roommates' families came to visit and we went out for dinner. They picked a really expensive restaurant, which upset my parents and me because we don't have the funds for that kind of spending in one night. We all stayed quiet and just ordered the cheapest items on the menu because we were embarrassed.

Another participant, a Black working class first-generation college student, reported that while talking with friends about spring break plans he felt pressured to tell them:
... that I would consider it when I knew that I did not have money to take a [spring break] trip like that. I told them that I wanted to go with them and that I would let them know but I know that my parents would not be able to finance that trip.

The majority of concealment occurred in the presence of interaction partners rated as having had a “higher” status (81 out of 133 partners). Situations that prompted concealment in this group of audience members included: social pressures, threats of disclosure, financial concerns, and encounters of privilege and classism. For example, participants reported concealing rather than not joining them in activities that required money. A bisexual working-class ciswoman wrote, “I went to visit a friend and ended up going out with her... I didn’t expect to spend money on liquor but felt like I should be drinking with everyone.” Participants also reported concealing with regard to activities during school breaks. A 20-year-old lower-middle class student shared, “In my lab, people were talking about their spring break trips and they asked me if I went anywhere. I said I had to work over break, instead of saying I couldn't afford spring break with my friends.”

Participants also reported that they concealed social class information in the presence of interaction partners whom they perceived to have an “equal” social status (21 partners). This was demonstrated by a 19-year-old working-class international student who reported, “My friends asked me to hang out with them, having some bubble tea and snacks. I refused and told them I had to study, but indeed I have to save money.” Another participant, a gender non-conforming biracial first-generation college student went along with costly plans to celebrate a friend’s birthday. They noted:

My friend’s birthday is coming up and we’re planning to get a hotel room and have a sleepover with our closest friends when we’re all back in [name of home city]. I got paid
today so I told her I would get the room for her, she shouldn’t have to pay for it, it’s her birthday. I got the room even though it’s a tight squeeze into my budget. I didn’t say anything to her about it.

Participants reported few instances of concealment in response to interaction partners who were rated as having a “lower” (4 partners) or “very much lower” (6 partners) social status than the participants. For example, a Black working-class student reported omitting information about her college financial support:

My friend and I were talking about scholarships and financial aid and talking about how it’s unfair sometimes that some people get both which I do and she did not know that I did. I didn’t talk about how much financial aid I received.

See Table 4.7 for the distribution of interaction partner social statuses and their frequency of occurrence.

Table 4.7

*Summary of Interaction Partner Statuses and their Frequency of Occurrence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner social status</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage occurrence of social status of all occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much higher</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much lower</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken together, participants endorsed concealing their class identities most frequently among friends, peers, and roommates. Additionally, concealment took place primarily among audience members whom participants perceived as having had higher or very much higher social statuses. While various situations prompted concealment across partner types and social statuses,
concealment among partners perceived as having had very much higher social statuses were strictly prompted by encounters with privilege and classism, and social pressures.

**RQ2: How do SLI Conceal Their Social Class Identities on a Routine Basis?**

Participants exhibited a range of strategies used to conceal their social class identities and information in different situations. Three categories of concealment strategies are: 1) disguising; 2) distraction; and 3) impression enhancement.

**Disguising strategies.** The first category is disguising strategies. Disguising strategies are attempts to convey “inaccurate” impressions to others by altering or hiding personal details indicative of one’s social class identity. In total, there were 79 occasions in which 40 participants reported situations that fit within three themes under this category.

**Overt deception.** The first theme is overt deception. There were 37 instances in which 26 participants told lies or “nontruths” related to their social class backgrounds to conceal their class information. Participants also lied to conceal other financial concerns with which they were struggling. For example, when a 21-year-old White working-class female student sustained an injury in public, she wrote, “When the ambulance arrived they said they could not help unless I went to the hospital. I decided that that would be way too expensive so I lied and said I felt better.” In a similar vein, students concealed the financial reasons behind their inability to purchase certain school supplies (e.g., textbooks), which reduced their ability to participate in classes fully.

When declining social invitations from others, participants overwhelmingly provided non-financial reasons that they deemed more appropriate for why they could not participate. Participants offered the following reasons: a) lack of time; b) urgent academic assignments; and
c) illness. For example, a 22-year-old Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander first-generation college student wrote:

My friends were going out to eat pizza, but I could not go because I have to save money. I did not tell them the real reason why I did not go out with them, I told them that I had too much work and that I was tired.

Another White lower-middle class student shared:

I am part of the [name of sport] team and they were all going out for food after practice. I can't spend much money, so I had to avoid going out to eat with them. I asked someone to take me back to campus right after practice and said I wasn't feeling well at all.

Some participants pretended to be inebriated to avoid having to spend more money on beverages with their friends.

**Omitting and selectively disclosing information.** The second theme is omission and selective disclosure. There were 32 occasions in which 22 participants reported strategically excluding class-related information during conversations with others. Such information included income, financial concerns, and socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, when an 18-year-old White first-generation college student was asked about her parents’ work, she wrote, “I said that my mom is a lunch lady, even though she has four jobs in total to make as much money as she can to support my family.” This tendency to selectively disclose also was demonstrated by a 21-year-old White first-generation male student. When discussing the affordability of college with others, he reported that he “didn’t tell them [that] I was low income, but instead that I... got really good financial aid because we are farmers.” When responding to social invitations, students omitted financial reasons for why they were unable to participate.
Minimizing distress. The third theme is minimizing distress. There were five instances in which three participants reported masking of the severity of their distress related to financial concerns by minimizing their worries and unpleasant emotions. For example, a 20-year-old White lower-middle class first-generation college student reported:

I was talking with one of my roommates about my summer plans and she asked if I had a job lined up and if I would have enough money to get by. I tried to lighten the mood by laughing about it and I exaggerated how long I would be set for.

In another example, a 24-year-old White pansexual working-class student recalled concealing her worry to financial aid representatives in this way:

I checked my financial aid and panicked when I found that the loans I thought were subsidized were marked as unsubsidized, meaning that the interest would be much higher than I had planned for. I had already spent the majority of the loan on rent for the semester and couldn't afford to pay it back in exchange for a subsidized loan... when I called the financial aid office I tried to come off as much more casual than I felt.

In summary, disguising via lying, omission or selective disclosure, and distress minimization allowed participants to avoid divulging details about their social class background, habits, and financial concerns. Through these strategies, participants concealed information indicative of their social class identities.

Impression enhancement strategies. The second category is impression enhancement strategies. Impression enhancement strategies represent attempts to manipulate one’s external appearance or self-presentation in accordance with perceived social class-based expectations. In total, there were 33 occasions in which 28 participants reported situations that fit under two themes within this category.
**Adhering to dominant social class norms.** The first theme is adhering to social class norms. There were 21 instances in which 21 participants reported disguising their social class identities by behaving in ways that conform to perceived upper-middle class norms or expectations. For example, a 24-year-old White gay lower-middle class student recounted:

It was my birthday... I didn’t want to say no to anything at an expensive restaurant because I felt pressured not to let anyone down. I didn’t hesitate to pay for things and I didn’t feel comfortable saying no to ordering more.

When presented with a fieldwork opportunity at school, a 21-year-old working-class first-generation college student wrote:

The trips were expensive, and would take several weeks, meaning I would lose time that could be spent earning money... I didn’t bring up the cost of the trips or ask about financing. I just told them I was excited about it.

Some of these actions to adhere to dominant or upper-middle class expectations bore potential negative financial consequences for participants. For example, despite knowing that she had insufficient funds in her bank account, a 20-year-old White middle-class student reported, “I felt embarrassed and did not want to tell the cashier I had to transfer money so I just put my card in... with hopes that I didn't get charged for overdrawing my account.” Participants also acted preemptively to avoid having their financial statuses “outed.” For example, a 21-year-old first-generation female student described an instance in which she was having dinner with a friend. She said, “I paid with cash because I was afraid my card might decline.”

**Managing impressions.** The second theme is managing impressions. There were 12 instances in which 11 participants described calibrating their physical and nonphysical attributes
to present themselves as belonging to desirable social class backgrounds. For example, a 24-year-old White gay lower-middle class student wrote:

I tried to wear all of my nicer clothes, which are limited in quantity [because]... I often feel like I need to wear high-end brand clothing when I am on campus. I frantically searched through clothes and was almost late to class because I was so concerned with how my outfit might affect how others see me.

Other students reported concealing aspects of themselves to present as having higher social status. This was demonstrated by a 27-year-old Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander first-generation college student who wrote:

I said that I work in sales and volunteer on the weekends. In actuality, I work in a call center and I referee on Sundays in a [recreational facility]. I covered up the truth and said that I work in sales to make it seem like I have a professional job and I make money.

In summary, impression enhancement via adherence to dominant social class norms and management of impressions allowed participants to portray or conduct themselves according to expectations of their preferred social statuses. Most participants used these strategies to convey a higher social status.

**Distraction strategies.** The third category is distraction strategies. Distraction strategies are efforts to minimize contact or attention drawn to participants and their class backgrounds to reduce opportunity for disclosure or discovery. In total, there were 21 occasions in which 19 participants reported situations that fit under three themes within this category.

**Disengaging from others.** The first theme is disengaging from others. There were 11 instances in which 11 participants responded with silence or social withdrawal to conceal their
thoughts, feelings, and reactions when topics pertaining to social class emerged in their
interactions. A 21-year-old White working-class female student wrote:

I was with friends and they were discussing what they wrote for the essay on diversity for
the nursing school application. They all said they didn't know what to say for it so they
made things up or exaggerated things. I wrote mine on being low income. However, I felt
embarrassed about this so... I did not say anything and just listened to others talk instead
of sharing my experiences.

As another example, an 18-year-old biracial working-class first-generation college student noted
that she “did not engage in a conversation” with her classmate when the latter discussed her
“privileged” upbringing such that she did not encounter financial struggles or discrimination.

Deflecting attention from self. The second theme is deflection of attention. There were
six incidents in which six participants deflected attention away from themselves by switching
topics and reducing others’ focus on them to avoid having their social class information revealed.

For example, when talking with a friend who had planned on buying “extravagant gifts” for their
family during Christmas, a 20-year-old White first-generation ciswoman reported that she
“generally kept the conversation on this person, not contributing much of my own information,
and eventually directed it toward exams.” A 20-year-old White lower-middle class ciswoman
reported, “I laughed and agreed a lot, and also tried to change the subject with humor [when] my
friends were discussing their homework schedules and things they did in between classes.”

Students also deflected attention away from their financial difficulties by postponing financial
decisions (e.g., delaying responses to social invitations).

Declining invitations. The third theme is declining invitations. There were four instances
in which four participants declined social invitations to avoid spending money without needing
to share their reasons. For example, a 21-year-old White working-class student noted that she “said I could not go and did not give an explanation” when she was invited to a holiday event. She did not offer to share the reason for her inability to participate. An 18-year-old straight middle-class international student also noted:

Whenever my friends invite me out for shopping or dinner or even a movie, I refuse because I do not have money to spend around casually and have to rather be careful what I spend my money on. I simply refuse to go along...

In summary, distraction via disengagement, deflection of attention, and declining invitations offered participants an opportunity to limit scrutiny from others. Through these strategies, participants resisted both the pressure to divulge their class information and to engage in activities that required money. For a summary of all categories and themes of concealment strategies, and their frequency of occurrence, see Table 4.8.

Table 4.8.

Summary of Categories and Themes of Concealment Strategies, and their Frequency of Occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentage occurrence of category and theme of all occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disguising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overt deception</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Omitting/selectively disclosing</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimizing distress</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression enhancement</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adhering to class norms</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing impressions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>21</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>16.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disengaging from others</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deflecting from self</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining invitations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>128*</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Five out of 133 observations were excluded because of missing or unclear entries.

Multilevel Modeling Procedures used to Test Hypothesized Relationships

To test the proposed hypotheses, multilevel modeling was conducted in a stepwise fashion as recommended by Snijders and Boskers (2012). The first hypothesis was that heightened morning negative mood will be associated with increased concealment effort later that day (H1). The second hypothesis was that concealment effort during the day will be associated with worse evening negative mood after controlling for morning negative mood (H2).

To test both hypotheses, control variables (e.g., day, weekend) were first entered as predictors to generate base models for comparison. Level 1 predictors (e.g., morning negative mood) were then entered followed by level 2 predictors (e.g., overall morning negative mood); random intercept models also were first modeled prior to random slope models (i.e., level 1 predictor slopes were allowed to vary randomly). In this case, a random intercept model allowed for different intercepts (across participants) but assumed a constant slope whereas a random slopes model allowed for both intercepts and slopes to vary across participants (Snijders & Boskers, 2012). As predictors were added and models were specified as random intercept or random slope, models were assessed for improved (or decreased) fit via inspection of their Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) values. Smaller values generally indicate better model fit. The two models with the lowest AIC and BIC values corresponding to each hypothesis were selected for a final comparison, where deviance tests
were performed to assess for significant differences between nested models. The chosen model for each hypothesis is described in more detail in the sections below.

**H1: Heightened morning negative mood will be associated with increased concealment effort later that day.**

Eight models were specified and compared for selection to test H1. The outcome variable was concealment effort and the predictor variables included morning negative mood (day-level) and mean morning negative mood (person-level). Control variables included day of participation and weekend. See Table 4.9 below for an overview of the specified models, their included predictors, and their corresponding AIC and BIC values. As seen in Table 4.9, the addition of day-level predictor morning negative mood in model 4 reduced the AIC and BIC values from model 1 where only the control variable day was specified. However, the addition of the control variable weekend in model 5 increased the AIC and BIC values, which indicated a poorer fit. Thus, the weekend variable was dropped from subsequent models. The addition of person-level mean morning negative mood in model 7 returned an AIC value consistent with model 4, but it increased the BIC value slightly. The specification of random slope models for the predictor of interest, negative mood (models 6 and 8) did not yield improved fit as compared to their corresponding random intercept models (4 and 7). This was shown in AIC and BIC value increases from models 4 to 6 and from models 7 to 8. Given that models 4 and 7 yielded the lowest AIC and BIC values among others, they were selected for final comparison. Because both models were nested (i.e., all predictors in model 4 were included in model 7), a deviance test was run and its results indicated no significant difference between them ($\chi^2 = 1.92, df = 1, p = 0.17$). This suggested that collectively, the variables in model 7 (including the person-level predictor mean morning negative mood) did not account for greater outcome variance when compared to
model 4. Further assessment of the coefficient of mean morning negative mood (person-level) indicates nonstatistical significance in the model 7 ($\gamma_{01} = 0.079, SE = 0.057, p = .168$). Its standardized coefficient of 0.0601 was obtained by multiplying the unstandardized coefficient 0.079 by the pooled standard deviation (0.381) of morning negative mood divided by the pooled standard deviation of concealment effort (0.504). This indicated a very small effect size. Given that both models were comparable in terms of their fit quality, the more parsimonious random intercept model 4 (i.e., fewer predictors) was selected for hypothesis testing as recommended by Bolger and Laurenceau (2013).

Table 4.9

**Overall Statistics of Models Predicting Concealment from Morning Negative Mood**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>BIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Day (control)</td>
<td>2893.6</td>
<td>2914.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Day, Weekend (controls)</td>
<td>2895.4</td>
<td>2921.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative mood</td>
<td>2665.5</td>
<td>2685.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative mood, Day</td>
<td>2664.2</td>
<td>2689.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Negative mood, Day, Weekend</td>
<td>2665.8</td>
<td>2696.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Negative mood*, Day</td>
<td>2667.2</td>
<td>2702.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Negative mood, Mean negative mood, Day</td>
<td>2664.2</td>
<td>2694.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Negative mood*, Mean negative mood, Day</td>
<td>2667.1</td>
<td>2707.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Variable slope allowed to vary in this model (i.e., random slope model)*

Contrary to the first hypothesis, results from model 4 indicated that concealment effort at the end of day was not predicted by morning negative mood ($\gamma_{10} = -0.085, SE = 0.052, p = .103$) after controlling for day of participation. See Table 4.10 for the fixed effects and variances estimated by the final model. To further assess for practical significance, a standardized regression coefficient of $-0.0641$ was obtained by multiplying the unstandardized coefficient ($-0.085$) by the pooled standard deviation (0.381) of morning negative mood divided by the pooled standard deviation of concealment effort (0.504). This indicated that each standard deviation
increase of negative morning mood, on average, only contributed to a small decrease in concealment effort by 0.0397 standard deviation. Results did not support the hypothesized positive relationship between participants’ negative mood in the morning and their level of social class concealment effort on the same day.

As a diagnostic step, a quantile-quantile (QQ) plot of the model’s residuals was obtained to verify that they were distributed normally. As shown in Figure 4.3 (a QQ plot of residuals against theoretical values which are normally distributed on the straight line), the distribution of the model’s residual estimates appeared positively skewed at the upper end, as shown by the divergence of the plotted data points away from the straight line. This suggested that there was a violation of normality. Therefore, the model’s standard error estimates were likely to be biased; consequently, the parameter estimates (i.e., coefficients) may be biased towards non-significance (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). One potential factor contributing to the skewed distribution of model residuals was the restricted range of the outcome variable, evening concealment effort.

Table 4.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 (within-person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative mood, $\gamma_{10}$</td>
<td>– 0.085</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day, $\gamma_{20}$</td>
<td>– 0.0099</td>
<td>0.0053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 (between-person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept, $\gamma_{00}$</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random effect variances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual, $\sigma^2$</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept, $\tau_0^2$</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *** $p < .001$
Figure 4.3. QQ plot of model residuals against theoretical (normally distributed) values.

**H2**: Concealment effort during the day will be associated with worse evening negative mood after controlling for morning negative mood.

Nine models were specified and compared for selection to test H2. The outcome variable was evening negative mood and the predictor variables included morning negative mood, daily concealment effort (day-level), and mean concealment effort (person-level). Control variables included day of participation and weekend. See Table 4.11 below for an overview of the specified models, their included predictors, and their corresponding AIC and BIC values. As seen in Table 4.11, the addition of day-level concealment effort in models 4 and 5 did not yield decreases in AIC and BIC values from models 1 and 2, where only the control variables were included. This suggests that the addition of day-level concealment effort as a predictor variable did not improve the model fit. However, concealment effort continued to be included in subsequent models given its centrality in the proposed hypothesis. Because the addition of the control variable weekend in model 5 increased the AIC and BIC values from model 4, it was dropped from subsequent models. Next, the inclusion of morning negative mood in model 6 resulted in decreased AIC and BIC values as compared to model 4; this suggested that the the
inclusion of morning negative mood in the model improved its fit. The addition of the person-level mean concealment effort in model 8 returned slightly higher AIC and BIC values than model 6. The specification of random slope models for the predictor of interest, daily concealment effort (models 7 and 9), did not yield improved fit as compared to their corresponding random intercept models (6 and 8). This was shown in the AIC and BIC value increases from models 6 and 8 to models 7 and 9.

Given that models 6 and 8 yielded the lowest AIC and BIC values among others, they were selected for final comparison. Because both models were nested (i.e., all predictors in model 6 were included in model 8), a deviance test was run and its results indicated no significant difference between them ($\chi^2 = 0.32, df = 1, p = 0.57$). This suggested that collectively, the variables in model 8 (including the person-level predictor mean concealment effort) did not account for greater outcome variance when compared to model 6. Further assessment of the coefficient of mean concealment effort (person-level) indicates nonstatistical significance in the model 7 ($\gamma_{01} = -0.104, SE = 0.183, p = .572$). Its standardized coefficient of $-0.114$ was obtained by multiplying the unstandardized coefficient ($-0.104$) by the pooled standard deviation of concealment effort (0.504) divided by the pooled standard deviation of evening negative mood (0.460). This indicated a very small effect size. Since both models were comparable in terms of their fit quality, the more parsimonious random intercept model 6 (i.e., fewer predictors) was selected for hypothesis testing as recommended by Bolger and Laurenceau (2013).

Table 4.11

*Overall Statistics of Models Predicting Evening Negative Mood from Concealment*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Predictors*</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>BIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Day (control)</td>
<td>2177.6</td>
<td>2198.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Day, Weekend (controls)</td>
<td>2179.2</td>
<td>2205.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Concealment</td>
<td>2219.8</td>
<td>2240.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Concealment, Day</td>
<td>2179.5</td>
<td>2205.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Concealment, Day, Weekend</td>
<td>2181.2</td>
<td>2212.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Concealment, Day, Morning negative mood</td>
<td>1906.1</td>
<td>1936.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Concealment*, Day, Morning negative mood</td>
<td>1909.7</td>
<td>1950.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Concealment*, Mean concealment, Day, Morning neg mood</td>
<td>1907.7</td>
<td>1943.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Concealment*, Mean concealment, Day, Morning neg mood</td>
<td>1911.3</td>
<td>1956.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Variable slope allowed to vary in this model (i.e., random slope model)

Contrary to the second hypothesis, results from model 6 indicated that negative mood at the end of day was not predicted by concealment effort for the day ($\gamma_{10} = 0.013$, $SE = 0.020$, $p = .51$) after controlling for participation day and morning negative mood. See Table 4.12 for the fixed effects and variances estimated by the final model. To assess for practical significance, a standardized regression coefficient of 0.015 was obtained by multiplying the unstandardized (0.013) coefficient by the pooled standard deviation of concealment effort (0.504) divided by the pooled standard deviation of evening negative mood (0.460). This indicated that a standard deviation increase in concealment effort, on average, contributed to a small increase in evening negative mood by 0.015 standard deviation. These results did not support the hypothesized positive relationship between participants’ daily concealment effort and their evening negative mood, after controlling for morning negative mood.

However, participation day predicted negative evening mood ($\gamma_{30} = -0.017$, $SE = 0.0036$, $p < .001$) such that an additional day of participation corresponded to a decrease of evening negative mood score by 0.017 for the person. This indicated that a person endorsed lower evening negative mood with each additional day of study. Similarly, morning negative mood predicted evening negative mood ($\gamma_{20} = 0.34$, $SE = 0.035$, $p < .001$) such that a 1-unit increase in a person’s morning mood scores corresponded to a 0.34 increase in their evening...
mood scores. The greater a person’s reported negative mood in the morning, the greater their endorsed negative mood in the evening. As a diagnostic step, a quantile-quantile (QQ) plot of the model’s residuals was obtained to verify that they were distributed normally. As shown in Figure 4.4 (a QQ plot of residuals against theoretical values which are normally distributed on the straight line), the distribution of the model’s residual estimates appeared approximately normally distributed. Thus, the assumption of normal distribution of residual estimates for the model was met.

Table 4.12

*Fixed Effects and Random Effect Variances for the Selected Model 6 Predicting Evening Negative Mood*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 (within-person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealment effort, $y_{10}$</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning negative mood, $y_{20}$</td>
<td>0.34***</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day, $y_{30}$</td>
<td>– 0.017***</td>
<td>0.0036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 (between-person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept, $y_{00}$</td>
<td>1.909***</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<td><strong>Random effect variances</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept, $\tau_0^2$</td>
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*Note.*** $p < .001*
Summary

Our qualitative findings demonstrated that participants concealed their social class identities in various types of situations, locations, and from different individuals. Results also indicated that participants predominantly concealed their class information in locations on-campus, and among friends and peers. The majority of interaction partners (from whom participants concealed) were rated as having had higher or very much higher social status relative to participants. Relatedly, situations that most frequently prompted concealment were those that resembled pressures that emerged in routine social interactions. With respect to concealment behaviors, participants used disguising, impression enhancement, and distraction strategies. While these strategies may differ, they appear interchangeable when preventing the exposure of social class information that participants may perceive to be stigmatizing to others. These actions required both physical and mental effort and at times, posed financial risks to participants. Furthermore, these actions may have created greater interpersonal distance between participants and their interaction partners due to the secrecy maintained around the former’s class identities.

Figure 4.4. QQ plot of model residuals against theoretical (normally distributed) values.
Similarly, participants may also experience greater psychological distance from their class backgrounds as they concealed these parts of themselves to others.

Results from our quantitative analysis did not support the proposed hypotheses. Consistent with correlational analyses at the within-person level, a person’s morning negative mood did not predict their concealment effort later that day. A person’s concealment effort during the day was not associated with their negative mood in the evening, after controlling for mood in the morning. One potential factor contributing to these null findings was the low frequency of concealment events endorsed by participants ($M = 1.28$) since only 60.58% of all participants reported at least one event during the 14-day study period. As a result of this low base rate of reported concealment events, there was a restriction of range for the variable concealment effort, which may have attenuated the potential relationships that were tested. This also may have contributed to the violation of the normality assumption for the model selected to test the first hypothesis.
CHAPTER V

Discussion

In this final chapter, I overview the purpose of this study, present its findings in the context of previous research, and discuss its limitations. I also highlight practical implications from these findings for higher education and counseling. Last, I share directions for future research.

Study Purpose

SLI face challenges when adjusting socially and academically to college; these challenges are postulated to negatively impact their academic persistence (Corrigan, 2003; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). As compared to their peers, students who are working-class and low-income experience lower levels of belongingness and poorer interaction quality with their peers and faculty (Ostrove & Long, 2013; Rubin et al., 2012). These outcomes also may be linked to low-income students’ experiences of classism during college (Thompson & Subich, 2013). For example, students may perceive their social statuses as diminished when encountering individuals from more advantaged backgrounds (Fouad & Brown, 2000). Given that upward mobility is often touted as a goal of higher education (Goldthorpe, 2003), the college environment may especially amplify the stigma salience of the social class identities held by SLI.

Previous research has shown that students with lower social statuses (e.g., SLI, FGCS, working class students) concealed their social class information in response to classism. To pass as middle- or upper-middle class, students avoided socializing with others (e.g., Granfield, 1991), withheld information about their financial statuses (e.g., Aries & Seider, 2005), and altered their dress and speech (e.g., Dias, 2011). Although research on social class concealment is limited, there is growing evidence to suggest that stigma concealment poses risks to mental
health (Beals et al., 2009; Larson et al., 2015; Schrimshaw et al., 2013). For example, researchers have found that among LGB individuals, concealment of sexual identities was linked to greater symptoms of depression and social phobia, and conversely, lower levels of psychological well-being (Cohen et al., 2016; Riggle et al., 2017). These findings partially support the CAB model of stigma concealment (Pachankis, 2007). According to the CAB model, in any given situation, contextual characteristics can activate a person’s thoughts and emotions related to their stigma, both of which can prompt behaviors to conceal their stigma. Efforts to hide one’s stigma can both be predicted by, and subsequently affect individuals’ affective states. One experience sampling (ES) study showed that college students with concealable stigmas, including low income status, reported higher levels of mood symptoms and lower self-esteem as compared to students who did not possess a concealable stigma (Frable et al., 1998).

Taken together, initial evidence suggests that SLI conceal their social class information in response to classism and that concealment may be linked to psychological outcomes. The purpose of this study was two-fold: first, to qualitatively describe the situations and behaviors associated with daily social class concealment among SLI, and second, to test whether concealment effort is linked with morning or evening negative mood. A daily diary design was used to track participants’ daily mood and social class concealment experiences over 14 days.

**Daily Experiences of Social Class Concealment**

Themes from the qualitative data highlighted the dynamic nature of social class concealment among SLI. While the daily prevalence of social class concealment in this sample is low, findings reflected its considerable frequency among friends and peers. Results from quantitative data, on the other hand, did not support the proposed links between negative mood and social class concealment effort.
Situational Characteristics of Social Class Concealment

With respect to situational characteristics, participants concealed their social class information across a range of events: 1) routine social pressures; 2) threats of social class disclosure; 3) financial concerns; and 4) encounters of privilege and classism. Across event types, participants demonstrated awareness of the potential stigma attached to their social class backgrounds and the consequences of having these identities known to others. These results corroborate previous research which has shown that students concealed their social class information in response to overt classism (e.g., prejudicial comments), fears of discrimination (e.g., reduced employment opportunity), and fears of being perceived as an outsider (e.g., different lifestyles; Aries & Seider, 2005; Dias, 2011; Granfield, 1991; Lehmann, 2009).

Findings from this study highlight how internalized classism may manifest for SLI during routine interactions with others. Participants were most frequently prompted to conceal their social class identities when encountering dilemmas that required them to consider whether or how to share their class information with others. For example, concerns about the financial costs of socializing with others emerged as a common predicament for participants as they circumvented participation and/or disclosures of these worries. Situations that threatened the exposure of participants’ social class identities (e.g., when asked questions about their family) prompted participants to conceal by presenting limited information about themselves. Participants also were prompted to conceal their financial worries related to college (e.g., tuition fees) and daily living (e.g., groceries) from friends, peers, instructors, and administrators. For SLI, the concealment of their financial concerns could exacerbate the stress they experience from financial hardship alone.
Results also indicated that participants concealed their class information when they observed others’ privilege (e.g., material possessions) and encountered classism (e.g., others’ limited social class awareness). This category reinforces findings in previous research on the lack of empathy and understanding of poverty experienced by a sample of low-income adults (Reutter et al., 2009). Past research on college students also has documented these encounters as motivating concealment among SLI and FGCS (e.g., Dias, 2011; Granfield, 1991). By activating participants’ awareness of their (often lower) social statuses in comparison to others, these events heightened the salience of participants’ social class stigma, thereby prompting concealment as postulated by the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007). However, in contrast to previous findings, these overt experiences of privilege and classism represented the smallest subset of events that prompted this sample of SLI to conceal their class information.

Overall, these situations demonstrate the presence of a dominant economic culture in college, which predisposes SLI to experience their social class identities as marginalized should they not meet the former’s expectations (Liu et al., 2004). These accounts also suggest that SLI can be highly cognizant of their social positions in this context, and of the attributes that signal their social class backgrounds (Warnock & Hurst, 2016).

By employing a daily diary design, this study extends previous research by capturing more granular information about each reported event of social class concealment among SLI. As predicted by the CAB model (2007), participants’ felt stigma around their social class identities appeared to be amplified by their perceptions of their interaction partners’ relative statuses. Specifically, the majority of participants endorsed concealing social class information in the presence of individuals with “higher” or “very much higher” social status (76.7% of all events). These results corroborate previous findings which indicated that SLI experienced greater stigma
around their social class backgrounds in “elite” institutions, due to greater levels of perceived differences between their and their peers’ wealth (e.g., Aries & Seider, 2005). Results also indicated that the majority of concealment occurred among peers (e.g., friends, roommates, classmates) and on-campus (e.g., classroom, housing, community spaces). While these results reinforce past findings (e.g., Granfield, 1991; Lehmann, 2009), they represent the first to highlight the prominence of friends and peers as audience members involved during concealment by SLI (75.5% of all events). Similarly, this study captured a greater range of locations (e.g., online and public spaces) where concealment took place, some of which overlapped with previous research (e.g., classrooms and dormitories in Lehmann, 2009).

One finding that warrants future attention is the intersection of race and social class in participants’ reported concealment. On several occasions, participants who identified as racial/ethnic minorities also included racialized experiences in their reports of social class concealment events. In particular, when these participants perceived others as having negative views of them based on their racial identity, they downplayed features that were associated with their racial identity (e.g., stopped speaking in Spanglish). This observation supports the Differential Status Identity Model (DSIM; Fouad & Brown, 2000) which posited that race and SES jointly influence one’s perceived status in society. In other words, the students also engaged in “racial identity work” (Khanna & Johnson, 2010) as a way to dis-identify racial attributes that signaled their diminished status in society.

Taken together, these findings represent the first to demonstrate the connections between the situational types, audience members, and contexts embedded in social class concealment among SLI by using a daily diary design. Concealment occurred in situations that activated financial concerns, threatened the disclosure of low-income status, and heightened social class
stigma among participants. These findings are consistent with previous theories (e.g., SCWM; Liu et al., 2004) and research (e.g., Thompson & Subich, 2013) which have demonstrated the pervasiveness of downward classism in the college setting, such that it can amplify students’ internalized classism and propensity to conceal parts of themselves. As a whole, these situational characteristics depict the invisible ways in which middle or upper-middle class norms permeate the daily college experiences of SLI.

**Behavioral Characteristics of Social Class Concealment**

To conceal their social class information, participants used disguising (e.g., lying), impression enhancement (e.g., altering appearance), and distraction (e.g., social disengagement) strategies. The primary aim of these behaviors is to prevent the exposure of students’ social class information to avoid being perceived or targeted as a member of a stigmatized group (Pachankis, 2007). Concealment strategies documented in this sample are consistent with stigma management strategies identified in previous research. First, disguising tactics such as selective disclosure and lying demonstrated in this study mirror secret-keeping strategies used by adults and college students who identified as low-income in past research (Aries & Seider, 2005; Reutter et al., 2009). However, given the availability of daily data in this study, a broader range of disguising tactics was captured. Of note, participants also disguised their social class backgrounds by minimizing the emotional distress they experienced regarding their financial concerns (e.g., containing anxiety). This new finding suggests that emotional concealment can serve as another way to manage one’s social class presentation.

Second, actions taken to enhance participants’ impressions (e.g., dressing up) were similar to those that have previously been documented among working-class law and first-generation college students, who attended elite institutions (Dias, 2011; Granfield, 1991). Results
from this study augment previous findings by illustrating the complex ways through which SLI enhanced their impressions. For example, participants made efforts beyond altering their outward appearances to portray a more desirable social status; they also made financial sacrifices to adhere to middle or upper-middle class social norms (e.g., spending money to go along with others during social events).

Third, distraction strategies such as social disengagement reiterate previous research which has indicated students’ use of social avoidance to prevent the disclosure of their social class backgrounds (e.g., Granfield, 1991). Alternative forms of distraction that were identified in this study were the use of silence and digression to reduce attention from and engagement with others, respectively. Despite their protective function, these distraction strategies can reinforce a sense of invisibility and social disconnection as suggested by the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007).

Taken together, these findings reify the concealable nature of social class identity as demonstrated in previous research (Aries & Seider, 2005; Dias, 2011; Granfield, 1991). Furthermore, findings from this study expand our understanding of the nuances in the behaviors used by students to conceal their social class identities. It is important to consider these concealment behaviors as a way to cope with the dominant upper-middle or middles class norms perpetuated in college (Diemer & Ali, 2005; Liu et al., 2004; Liu & Soleck, 2004). Situating these concealment strategies within the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007) allows us to further consider their unintended consequences. Despite their protective function, concealing behaviors may generate interpersonal distance between SLI and their support networks. For example, by concealing the financial barriers that prevented participants from joining social or extracurricular activities, they may have foregone opportunities to obtain practical and emotional support from
others. Thus, concealment may inadvertently deprive SLI from gaining support and forging social connections, all of which may reinforce their sense of isolation in college.

**Affective Characteristics of Social Class Concealment**

The use of a daily diary design allowed the present study to examine the affective characteristics of social class concealment by testing the relationship between morning negative mood and concealment effort later in the day. The relationship between concealment effort and evening negative mood (on the same day) also was tested via multilevel modeling.

Results from the quantitative analyses did not support the study’s hypotheses regarding the affective implications of social class concealment. Participants’ morning negative mood was not linked with concealment effort during the day, and concealment effort was not predictive of evening negative mood (after controlling for morning mood). As such, results do not support the posited links between social class concealment and negative affect in the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007). One explanation for these results is that state-based negative mood does not predict the effort taken to conceal one’s social class information. It is also possible that the propensity to conceal may be linked with more stable mood profiles or other trait-like factors such as self-esteem. However, themes from the qualitative data revealed that several participants felt ashamed, embarrassed, and anxious when concealing. Considering these findings together, it is possible that while concealment effort may have heightened negative mood, these effects were temporary. Additionally, it seems plausible that other affective implications of social class concealment reflected in participants’ qualitative reports (e.g., shame) may not have been captured via the measures used. Future research may benefit from integrating measures of trait-(e.g., self-esteem) and state-based (e.g., positive and negative affect) psychological outcomes to
determine their potential relationships with social class concealment at the between- and within-person levels.

Additionally, results from validation tests of the multilevel model to assess whether morning negative mood predicted concealment effort indicated non-normality in the distribution of the model’s standard error estimates. Consequently, the parameter estimates may be biased towards non-significance (Cohen et al., 2003). Thus, a relationship between morning negative mood and concealment effort may indeed exist. Another explanation for the null findings is the restriction of range in the daily concealment effort variable given that the majority of scores entered at the day-level was ‘0’ to reflect the lack of concealment reported by participants. Because this variable was included in the testing of both hypotheses, its restricted range likely attenuated its respective relationships with morning and evening negative mood. This also may have contributed to the non-normal distribution of the model residuals highlighted above. Last, the null findings also may have been influenced by measurement concerns that may have contributed to insufficient statistical power to detect differences (see Limitations section for more details).

**Summary**

These results reveal social class concealment as a covert phenomenon that occurs for many SLI across a range of racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual identities. These concealment experiences reflect the pervasiveness of classism in college in that it can transcend settings, people, and places. While these events may seem benign on the surface, findings illuminated the unstated expectations to conform to the upper middle- or middle-class norms embedded in higher education. When students experience their social class backgrounds as being misaligned with the norms of their educational environment, they engage in concealment behaviors to avoid being
discovered. Overall, these findings demonstrate the interconnections between the situational and behavioral components of social class concealment as posited by the CAB model (Pachankis, 2007).

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to the study design and sample that warrant consideration. First, to promote participant engagement and reduce attrition, the daily morning and evening surveys sent to participants were designed to take between two and five minutes for completion to ensure brevity. As such, the evening survey only included closed- and open-ended items that captured participants’ social class experiences, with particular emphasis on the situational and behavioral characteristics of their concealment efforts. Therefore, the study did not assess for other events that may have influenced participants’ negative mood. For example, while events such as illness, academic stressors, and encounters of other forms of discrimination may have contributed to participants’ levels of negative mood, they were not captured in this design and their effects were not accounted for in our analyses. Future studies that employ ES designs to examine the psychological implications of social class concealment should consider ways to assess for these events and control for potential confounds that are linked to outcomes. For example, researchers could add items to prompt participants to report other stressors encountered and to rank the salience of these events as compared to their social class concealment experiences.

Second, it is possible that students may not have been effectively prompted to describe their social class concealment experiences based on the single “gatekeeping” item that was posed in each evening survey. While this item (“Did you conceal or hide aspects of your social class background during any event or interaction?”) was intended to be a brief, yet global statement
that encouraged participants to reflect on their day and report any class concealment experiences, its lack of specificity may not have adequately activated participants’ recall of these experiences. Thus, not all class concealment experiences may have been captured. This could have contributed to the low total number of observations (133 out of a possible total of 1,287) recorded.

Additionally, the use of the single 5-point Likert scale (1 = *A little*, 5 = *A lot*) item to measure concealment effort (“How much effort did you put in to conceal or hide your social class?”) may have lacked sensitivity to detect participants’ perceived levels of effort expended. Coupled with the relatively low prevalence of concealment events endorsed in this sample, this may have contributed to the low average concealment effort scores across all participants (0.22 out of a possible score of 5), thereby restricting the range of values of this variable. This range restriction may have negatively impacted the ability to detect differences in the multilevel models. Future research on social class concealment should consider using a longer unit of analysis (e.g., weeks instead of days) to capture more events and an alternative variable that may be more sensitive to daily fluctuations (e.g., thoughts related to social class identity). Additional research is needed to operationalize social class concealment to augment measurement precision.

Third, negative mood was selected as a proxy for the psychological impact of social class concealment and was measured using the POMS-15 (Cranford et al., 2006). Although the POMS-15 has been used in other ES studies, not all negative mood types are captured in the scale. For example, participants reported feeling shame, guilt, and embarrassment in the open-ended survey items. Several participants also commented on the limited range of emotions presented in the POMS-15 when debriefing their experiences with researchers. For example, participants noted the repetitive nature of items such as “worn out” and “exhausted” in the
Fatigue subscale. Several participants also reported that certain emotions, such as “guilt” and “stressed” were not included. Because these emotions were not included in the POMS-15, it is possible that participants’ negative mood scores were biased downward (i.e., less severe) leading to reduced variability in the negative mood scores. As a result, this may have attenuated the potential relationship between concealment effort and evening negative mood and contributed to the null findings from testing the second hypothesis. Future researchers are encouraged to use measures that tap shame or guilt.

Fourth, all participants were required to attend an orientation to gain familiarity with study procedures. During orientations, researchers introduced information to participants to ensure that participants had a working definition of social class concealment so that they could track and report these experiences. It is possible, however that these orientations may have influenced participants’ awareness and recall of events they classified as concealment events. Although the examples of concealment events presented were consistent for all orientation sessions, it is possible that participants may have been primed to be more likely to recall and report only experiences that were similar. Future ES studies can reduce these priming effects by encouraging participants to report all stressful events and subsequently analyzing them to identify concealment events instead of having participants self-categorize their experiences. Because of the reduced reliance on participants to track the “right” events, these orientations can offer more general guidelines to reduce priming. Future studies also may consider alternative ways of training participants (e.g., emphasizing the range of events that can represent social class concealment).

Fifth, participants were recruited from a public, predominantly white, 4-year research-intensive university in the U.S. Midwest. While our participant sample is demographically
diverse in ways that reflect national characteristics of SLI (e.g., 57.69% were first-generation college student, approximately 50.0% were racial-ethnic minorities), it may not have reflected other institutional and regional differences. Thus, results must be contextualized given sample restrictions.

Given the study’s emphasis on subjective experiences of social class, participants were eligible if they self-identified as low-income. Objective indicators such as income were not used as a part of our inclusion criteria. Additionally, participants were asked to report their perceived social class and complete a measure of perceived social status (DSIS; Thompson & Subich, 2006, 2007). While the average score on the DSIS indicated that the average participant perceived themselves has having substantially less access to economic resources, power, and prestige as compared to an average U.S. citizen, the sample also included a handful of participants who rated themselves as having higher levels of social class and family incomes. For example, three participants perceived their social class as “Upper-Middle” and nine reported annual family income levels of $100,000 and above.

This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that some participants shared that they considered themselves as low-income because they were not currently financially dependent on their families. Other participants also disclosed having had recent experiences of financial hardship (e.g., bankruptcy). While this discrepancy between indicators of social status reflects a common challenge in measuring social class in psychology and health research (Krieger, Williams, & Moss, 1997; Liu et al., 2004), it is important to acknowledge that this sample may have included participants with a broader range of income backgrounds given the study’s use of self-identification as its main eligibility criterion. Thus, the nature of the social class concealment experiences of participants who reported higher social class or family incomes may
differ from the rest of this sample of SLI. For example, two concealment observations pertained to participants’ hiding of material possessions that may have signaled wealth. Additionally, participants who self-selected into this study may have been more aware of their social class identities and more motivated to share their social class experiences. It is unclear whether or how these experiences may differ from other SLI who may differentially experience their class identities. Future studies should integrate both objective (e.g., family income) and subjective (e.g., perceived class) indicators of social status when determining participant eligibility.

While we were able to recruit a large number of participants for a daily diary study, only 60.58% of participants endorsed experiencing at least one social class concealment during the 14-day study period. Because paired morning and evening survey data were needed for modeling purposes, missing either survey from a given participant resulted in the loss of that day’s data for analyses. Thus, a larger sample over a longer period of time is needed to increase statistical power for detecting potential relationships between concealment and other variables.

**Implications**

**Higher Education and Academic Advising**

Findings highlight the often-invisible financial burden students carry in their daily lives. Anxiety about their capacity to finance college and sustain daily living emerged as a salient theme. These results reflect current critiques on the affordability of higher education for students broadly, and specifically for SLI (e.g., Delaney, 2014). As more students from underrepresented backgrounds enter college in the U.S. (Espinosa, Turk, Taylor, & Chessman, 2019), it is imperative for faculty, student support staff, and administrators to consider how these financial pressures impact students’ academic and social participation.
A substantial percentage of reported concealment events occurred in the classroom in the presence of peers and instructors. Given that data was collected across different time points in an academic year, this finding reflects the potential for activities or incidents commonly associated with the academic cycle (e.g., start of a course, assignment deadlines) to contribute to situations that can prompt students’ social class concealment. Thus, it is important for instructors to explicitly address the financial implications of the activities or opportunities introduced in courses. For example, extracurricular activities such as internships or fieldwork opportunities can be time-consuming and costly, especially for SLI. Thus, when presenting these options, instructors can increase access for all students if information about scholarships or financial assistance are simultaneously offered. Instructors also can support students’ financial planning by announcing anticipated costs for supplies or class materials at the start of courses. The integration of social class issues in classroom discussions may encourage SLI to disclose their backgrounds and seek support.

Given that students may conceal their social class information, advisors are encouraged to broach topics related to social class when engaging with students. For example, advisors could explore the tensions that students experience when straddling between their aspirational social status and social class of origin. In particular, advisors should be attentive to the costs that students bear when seeking upward mobility, such as a sense of loss or distance from their communities-of-origin (Morton, 2019). By acknowledging these tensions, advisors can offer hope and assist SLI in navigating their evolving social class identities during college.

Similarly, career advisors working with SLI are encouraged to attend to social class considerations when exploring students’ career interests and goals. For instance, advisors should discuss with students the social class expectations they may experience in job settings (e.g.,
white-collar professions) which may subsequently reinforce their pressure to conceal their social class backgrounds. Advisors can also support students in identifying practical ways to navigate these pressures when seeking employment, as well as when exploring their career interests and goals.

On a programmatic level, administrators could consider initiatives that disrupt systemic classism by raising awareness of social class issues among students. This can be particularly beneficial given the high frequency of social class concealment documented among peers. For example, institutions with campus housing could integrate social class issues in their residential curriculum. Staff members can promote social class identity as another dimension of diversity (as articulated in the SCWM by Liu et al., 2004) using experiential activities that promote self-reflection and raise residents’ awareness of their levels of privilege and power in society (e.g., taking the DSIS by Thompson & Subich, 2006, 2007). When devoting resources to combat food and housing insecurity experienced by students (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, & Hernandez, 2017), administrators also should consider the manner in which these resources are promoted. For example, the availability and ways to access these resources should be advertised broadly to all students. Physical resources, such as food pantries should be placed in central locations with varying hours to accommodate different schedules. Last, the establishment of affinity student organizations (e.g., first-generation or working-class students’ groups) can further galvanize social support for affected students, which can strengthen their sense of belonging.

Counseling Practice

Although this study was not specifically designed to inform clinical practice, the results highlight implications for counseling. Given the invisibility of social class stigma (Warnock & Hurst, 2016), mental health professionals who work with SLI should examine how social class
issues contribute to students' psychological concerns. By explicitly attending to issues of social class in psychotherapy (Appio, Chambers, & Mao, 2013; Thompson, Cole, & Nitzarim, 2012), mental health professionals can diminish students’ barriers to discussing their social class identities as sources of stigma.

Mental health professionals are encouraged to explore how students respond to class stigma. For instance, mental health providers can identify with clients the benefits, costs, and consequences of concealment as a strategy used to respond social class stigma. Additionally, mental health professionals are encouraged to bolster their clients’ awareness of their social class identities. For example, interventions targeting low-income students’ cognitive flexibility may buffer against the erosion of pride of their working-class roots that they could encounter when seeking upward mobility (Brewster, Moradi, DeBlaere, & Velez, 2013). One participant in this study endorsed concealing their social class information while attending group counseling. Thus, it is also important to assess whether clients are concealing their social class backgrounds during therapy.

University counseling centers should offer services that can meet the specific needs of SLI and evaluate the effectiveness of such programs (Thompson, Nitzarim, Cole, Frost, Ramirez Stege, & Vue, 2015). One option would be to create a support group for low-income students where facilitators can discuss topics such as social class stigma and its impact on members. Other ways to increase the accessibility of mental health services to SLI include abolishing session fees, extending hours, and offering online resources. Partnerships with other campus offices that work closely with SLI in promoting mental health awareness also are recommended.

Directions for Future Research
Taken together, results from this study illuminate a number of directions for future research. Below, I offer suggestions to further investigate the psychological process of social class concealment and the development of one’s social class identity using varied research designs. Increased attention to these topics will enhance our knowledge of people’s experiences of social class stigma and support interventions to buffer against its negative effects.

**Social class concealment.** More research is needed to define and operationalize social class concealment as a psychological construct. Scale development studies are recommended to clarify what constitutes social class concealment and to develop instruments that can more accurately measure this experience. These efforts will provide a mechanism by which scholars and practitioners can better assess its implications in people’s lives, including psychological distress and well-being. Among college students, the examination of the relationships of social class concealment to social connectedness, perceived social support, and academic self-efficacy is warranted.

Future investigations of the links between social class concealment and negative affect should consider ways to capture both global (e.g., negative mood) and specific emotional states (e.g., shame). Furthermore, the testing of potential moderators may be useful to determine factors that affect the strength of relationships between concealment and other outcomes. For example, researchers may assess whether person-level variables such as perceived social class moderate the relationship between concealment effort and negative mood.

Further examination of the CAB model’s (Pachankis, 2007) applicability to social class concealment is needed. In particular, more research is needed to examine the implications of concealment on people’s self-evaluations. The CAB model suggests that concealment behaviors may reinforce identity ambivalence and contribute to negative self-views. Thus, researchers
could examine whether or how concealment behaviors influence participants’ perceptions of their social class identity and their overall self-esteem.

**Intersectionality and social class experiences.** Another area of investigation is the within-group differences and similarities in social class experiences among SLI. Such findings would provide a more dynamic understanding of how various social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual identity) intersect and shape one’s sense of their social class identity (Fouad & Brown, 2000). For example, researchers may exclusively target individuals who identify as racial/ethnic minorities and low-income in order to examine their experiences of classism as well as their social class concealment behaviors. Future research that includes larger samples of participants that represent racial, gender, and sexual diversity would allow researchers to analyze the disparate and shared aspects of social class concealment based on participants’ intersecting identities.

Additional research is needed to examine social class concealment and its psychological implications on people in the workplace. Previous literature has documented the deleterious consequences of management of invisible stigmas (e.g., mental health issues) at work (e.g., Claire, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005; Jones & King, 2014). These consequences have included job dissatisfaction, lowered task performance, and psychological distress (Jones & King, 2014). However, research on social class concealment in the workplace is limited. To date, only one study has directly examined the behaviors used among a sample of White men to conceal their low-income backgrounds in the workplace (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2019). Thus, more research is warranted to understand the ramifications of social class concealment in the workplace, particularly among low-income individuals for whom threats to employment may be especially salient.
Social class identity development. Scholars interested in human development are encouraged to study the evolution of social class identity consciousness. In this study, some participants shared that they noticed symbols of their social statuses early in their educational lives (e.g., primary and secondary education). Thus, longitudinal or cohort studies could shed light on the developmental or temporal dimension of social class consciousness for individuals during and prior to college. These findings could inform future educational interventions to support students’ development of social class consciousness (e.g., Liu et al., 2012).

Results from this study demonstrated that participants’ varying levels of awareness and comfort with their social class identities may have influenced their behaviors to conceal. For example, it seems possible that some participants may not have endorsed concealment because they were unaware that they had concealed. A more optimistic interpretation is that participants may have chosen not to conceal because they were aware of, and felt positively about, their social class identities. This was reflected in our conversations with some participants who noted changes in how they managed their impressions because of an increased understanding and acceptance of their social class backgrounds over time. Further research is, however, needed in order to more deeply understand the underlying motivations of people’s concealment behaviors and their connections to their social class identity.

Research designs. Results from this study and prior research (e.g., Frable et al., 1998; Mohr & Sarno, 2016) highlight the importance of using different research designs and methods in order to advance knowledge in this area. Researchers interested in examining the sequence of people’s experience of stigma should consider employing ES designs to obtain “real-time” data that can provide rich information for analysis (e.g., Beals et al., 2009; King et al., 2017). In particular, ES designs allows researchers to disentangle within- and between-group differences
that can be crucial to understanding the dynamic processes involved in people’s responses to
social stigma. One way to extend this study would be to vary the time intervals when prompting
participants to respond (i.e., using random instead of fixed interval) so that more robust data can
be obtained about their moment-to-moment experiences. Additionally, it may be advantageous to
allow participants to initiate reports of events as quickly as they occur to mitigate against any
information loss due to time lags (Iida et al., 2012). To more deeply understand the cognitive-
affective-behavioral processes of social class concealment, studies that leverage in-depth
interviews with participants could elicit more detailed information. Future research using ES
designs can also integrate interviews with participants to follow-up on their experiences.

Experimental designs can also be helpful to examine the factors that affect how people
respond to social class stigma. For example, in a quasi-experimental study to test how
individuals who are low-income may respond to downward classism, participants could be
assigned to vignette conditions that vary in the type of classism perpetuated (e.g., interpersonal
vs. systemic) and in the portrayed status of the interaction partner (e.g., working class vs. upper
class). To examine differences in outcomes, participants would be asked to report their reactions
and respond to instruments that measure stress, well-being, or self-esteem.

Participatory action research (PAR) also can positively impact SLI by cultivating
personal reflection and social engagement through research activities. While this study was not
designed as a form of PAR at the outset, its various components provided participants with
opportunities to reflect on their social class identities and engage with peers who share similar
backgrounds. During orientations, participants frequently met in small groups to discuss their
social class-related experiences and at times, their feelings of exclusion as low-income students
on their campus. These orientations offered a space for participants to experience a sense of
validation and connection with each other. Additionally, several participants who had completed this study indicated that they had gained more insight about their mood and social class experiences from responding to the daily surveys. Future studies can further engage SLI throughout the research process to maximize their potential for generating social action among participant communities.

In a similar vein, intervention-based research (e.g., program evaluations) is needed to assess the outcomes of programs intended to support college students’ identity development. Our quantitative analysis also yielded a positive effect of day of participation on evening negative mood such that participants endorsed lower mood levels with each passing day. While it is unclear if this effect reflected the benefits from a daily self-reflective exercise as prompted by this study (Iida et al., 2012), writing-based interventions (e.g., Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999) represent a potentially promising direction to support students’ navigation of social class stigma.

**Summary**

Taken together, this study highlights the diversity of concealment strategies that SLI use to cope with social class stigma. Concealment is prompted in diverse situations. As a whole, findings reinforce social class identity as a form of concealable stigma for SLI. While no significant links between concealment effort and negative mood were found via the quantitative data collected, the qualitative findings provide preliminary support for the connections between the situational and behavioral characteristics as postulated in Pachankis’ (2007) stigma concealment framework. Despite the study’s limitations, these findings offer practical guidance for higher education and counseling professionals who provide support to SLI. Finally, these findings raise further questions about the construct of social class concealment, its underlying mechanisms, and its implications on psychological health, which warrant future research.
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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

What is your gender identity?
____ Cisgender male
____ Cisgender female
____ Trans male/Trans man
____ Trans female/Trans woman
____ Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
____ Different identity (please state): ___________

Age: ____ years

How do you identify your sexual orientation?
____ Lesbian
____ Gay
____ Bisexual
____ Queer
____ Straight
____ Different identity (please state): ___________

Academic class standing (check one):
____ Freshman
____ Sophomore
____ Junior
____ Senior
____ 5 years+

Are you a full time or part time student? _____ Full time _____ Part time

Are you a transfer student? ___ Yes ___ No
If yes, from where?
____ 2-year community college
____ Technical college
____ 4-year university or college
____ Other (Please list: ___________)

Current GPA: __________

Major (if undeclared, state undeclared): __________

How is your college education financed? (Check all that apply):
____ Parents or Legal Guardians _____ I pay for my own education
____ Work Study program _____ Student loans
____ Financial aid/Scholarships _____ Savings
____ Relatives _____ GI Bill
____ Other (Please list: ___________)

Are you currently employed? _____ Yes _____ No

Are you currently working for NO pay (e.g., volunteer work)? _____ Yes _____ No
On average, how many hours per week do you work? _____ hours

Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? (Check all that apply)
   _____ Black or African American
   _____ Hispanic, Latin@, or Chican@
   _____ Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander
   _____ American Indian/ Alaskan Native
   _____ White or Caucasian American
   _____ Biracial or Multiracial
   _____ Different identity (Please state): ______________

Which of the following best describes your legal status in the U.S.?
   _____ U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident
   _____ International student
   _____ Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient
   _____ Undocumented student
   _____ Refugee status

Do you identify as someone with a disability or impairment? _____Yes _____No

What is the combined annual income of the person(s) who raised you at home?
   _____ $0-19,999
   _____ $20,000-39,999
   _____ $40,000-59,999
   _____ $60,000-79,999
   _____ $80,000-99,999
   _____ $100,000-119,999
   _____ $120,000-139,999
   _____ $140,000-159,999
   _____ $150,000-179,999
   _____ $180,000-199,999
   _____ $200,000 and above

If you are no longer living in the family in which you were raised, what is your current annual income?
   _____ $0-19,999
   _____ $20,000-39,999
   _____ $40,000-59,999
   _____ $60,000-79,999
   _____ $80,000-99,999
   _____ $100,000-119,999
   _____ $120,000-139,999
   _____ $140,000-159,999
   _____ $150,000-179,999
   _____ $180,000-199,999
   _____ $200,000 and above

How do you describe your social class? _____________________________
In thinking about your past and present experiences, which label best describes your perceived social class?

- Lower Class
- Working Class
- Lower-Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper-Middle Class
- Upper Class

Do you identify as a first-generation college student? ____ Yes ____ No

Please provide information regarding your primary caregivers’ education.

Caregiver #1 (state relationship): ______ 
What is this person’s highest level of completed education?
- No formal schooling
- Some grade school
- 8th grade
- High school or GED
- Some college
- 2-year college
- College
- Graduate school

Caregiver #2 (state relationship): ______ 
What is this person’s highest level of completed education?
- No formal schooling
- Some grade school
- 8th grade
- High school or GED
- Some college
- 2-year college
- College
- Graduate school
Appendix B

**Differential Status Identity Scale (DSIS)**

Compare yourself to what you think the average citizen of the United States is like. Please indicate how you compare to the average citizen in terms of the items below using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Much Below</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above Very Much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, if you believe you are equal to the average U.S. citizen in terms of the financial resources needed to pursue a high-quality university education, you would mark “0” to item 1 below.

1. Ability to give your children (now or in the future) additional education experiences like ballet, tap, art/music classes, science camp, etc.
2. Ability to afford to go to the movies, restaurants, and/or the theater on a regular basis.
3. Ability to join a health club/fitness center.
4. Ability to afford regular dental visits.
5. Ability to afford dry cleaning on a regular basis.
6. Ability to travel recreationally.
7. Ability to travel overseas for business and/or pleasure.
8. Ability to shop comfortably in upscale department stores, such as Saks Fifth Avenue.
9. Potential for receiving a large inheritance.
10. Ability to secure loans with low interest rates.
11. Ability to hire professional money managers.
12. Ability to go to a doctor or hospital of your own choosing.
13. Ability to hire others for domestic chores (e.g., cleaning, gardening, child care, etc.).
14. Ability to afford prescription medicine.
15. Ability to afford elective surgeries and/or high-cost medical examinations, such as MRIs or CAT scans.

Compare what is available to you in terms of type and/or amount of resources to what you believe is available to the average citizen of the United States. Please indicate how you compare to the average citizen in terms of the type and amount of resources listed below using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Much Below</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above Very Much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, if you believe you are equal to the U.S. citizen in home(s), you would mark “0” for item 1 below.
1. Home(s)  
2. Land  
3. Stocks and Bonds  
4. Money  
5. Cars  
6. Computers  
7. New Appliances (Washers, Dryers, Refrigerators, etc.)  
8. Amount of Education  
9. Quality of High School(s) Attended  
10. Life Insurance  
11. Quality of Health Insurance  
12. Savings  
13. Maids or Cooks  
14. Close Connections to the Rich and Powerful  
15. Quality of Health Care

Compare yourself to what you think the average citizen of the United States is like. Please indicate how you compare to the average citizen in your ability to do the things below using the followingscale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-2 Very Much Below</th>
<th>-1 Below Average</th>
<th>0 Equal</th>
<th>+1 Average</th>
<th>+2 Above Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

For example, if you believe you are equal to the average U.S. citizen in your ability to be respected and heard by others in your community, you would mark “0” to item 1.

1. Contact people in high places for a job or position.  
2. Contact people who can help you get out of legal problems.  
3. Start in a high-profile position of responsibility  
4. Get information and services not available to the general public.  
5. Control how your group is represented in history, media, and the public.  
6. Receive a fair trial.  
7. Become a millionaire by legal means.  
8. Control the type and amount of work of others.  
9. Control the salary and compensation of others.  
10. Influence the laws and regulations of your state or city/town.  
11. Influence state of federal educational policies.  
12. Influence the policies of a corporation.  
13. Influence where and when stores are built and operated.  
14. Influence where and when waste treatment facilities are built and operated.  
15. Influence the decision-making of foundations, charities, hospitals, museums, etc.
Compared to how society values or appreciates the average U.S. citizen, how does society value or appreciate your...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much Less</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Much More</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Ethnic/racial group  2. Socioeconomic group  3. Nationality

Compared to how society values or appreciates the average U.S. citizen, how does society value or appreciate the...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much Less</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Much More</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Neighborhood in which you live  2. Type of home you live in  3. Places where you shop  4. Places where you relax and have fun  5. Type and amount of education you have  6. Type of car you drive  7. Position you hold in society

Compared to how society values or appreciates the average U.S. citizen, how does society value or appreciate your...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much Less</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Much More</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C

Profile of Mood States-15 (POMS-15)

**Morning prompt:**
Please indicate the extent to which you are feeling or experiencing these feelings right now, in the morning.

**Evening prompt:**
Please indicate the extent to which you are feeling or experiencing these feelings right now, in the evening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Quite a bit</td>
<td>Extremely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anxiety:**
1. Anxious
2. On edge
3. Uneasy

**Depression:**
4. Sad
5. Hopeless
6. Discouraged

**Anger:**
7. Angry
8. Resentful
9. Annoyed

**Fatigue:**
10. Fatigued
11. Worn out
12. Exhausted

**Vigor:**
13. Vigorous
14. Cheerful
15. Lively
Appendix D

Class Concealment Report

1. In the last 24 hours, have you experienced any event(s) or interaction(s) that made you think about your social class background? _____ Yes _____ No
   - If no, end of survey.
   - If yes, next question.

2. Did you conceal or hide aspects of your social class background during any event or interaction? _____ Yes _____ No
   - If no, briefly describe the event(s) that made you think about your social class background
     ______________________________________________________
   - If yes, was there another event?
     o Yes
       If yes, briefly describe the event(s) that made you think about your social class background
         ______________________________________________________ (up to a total of 3 event descriptions)
     o No, end of survey
   - If yes, next question.

3. Describe the event that made you conceal? ____________________________________

4. What did you do or say to conceal or hide aspects of your social class? ______________

5. How much effort did you put in to conceal or hide your social class?

   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Where did this event happen? Check the best option:
   — Classroom
   — Dorm/ Housing
   — Other on-campus location (please specify): __________
   — Other off-campus location (please specify): __________

7. Who did you interact with? Check the best option:
   — Friend
   — Instructor/ Professor
   — Roommate
   — Group of people (please specify): __________
   — Classmate
   — Other (please specify): __________

8. How would you rate the social status of THE PERSON or GROUP you interacted with compared to yours?

   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much lower</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Very much higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Was there a different event that made you think about your social class background?
   - If no, end of survey
   - If yes, return to question 2 through 9 (up to total of 3 concealment event descriptions)
Appendix E

Orientation Script

1. Welcome and introduction
Hi, my name is [NAME] and I am one of the research members for this project. I’m so glad that you’re interested in joining this study.

Goal: Tell you a bit more so you know next steps and also to set up payment.

Study: Learn about your social class experiences and how they are connected to your mood from day to day. Hope to use the findings to improve support for students who are negatively impacted by needing to hide social class backgrounds.

If more than 1 person: To protect your privacy, I ask that you refrain from using your names or sharing any information that may feel would identify you or may be too sensitive. I also ask that you keep the content shared today by your fellow participants confidential, which means not discussing it with others outside of this session.

Say a bit about yourself and why this topic is important to you.

2. Daily diary logistics
   a. Survey schedule
   For the next 14 days starting [DATE], you will be filling out two short surveys online—one in the morning and one at night. The morning survey will open from 6:00 a.m. to 12noon, and the evening one will open from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight. You will get an email for each survey and also a reminder at 9am and 9pm daily to fill out the surveys (if you haven’t done so).

   Easiest to do it 1st thing in the morning before you interact with others, and the last thing at night after interacting with others. Using the empty time-sheet, could you take a look at your schedule for this period and write down tentatively when you’ll be completing these morning and evening surveys.

   b. Reimbursement schedule
   To reimburse you for your time and effort, you will receive $1 per day for completing both of the morning and evening surveys, and $3 as a bonus for completing all surveys for 1st week. That will be $10 total for the week. The same applies for the 2nd week. You will also receive a bonus of $5 if you complete both weeks’ surveys, which means that you will receive $25 in total.

   We really appreciate your full participation as much as possible!

   c. Q&A – Do you have any questions?

3. Clarifying concepts
Let’s clarify the terms so we can be on the same page – that way, you can feel clear about what to report.

   a. Social class identity
   What comes to your mind when you think about social class?

   Ideas: wealth, income, education, occupation, social ranking
The technical definition I use to describe social class identity is a “rich system of cultural expectations, manners, customs, and social norms” grounded a person’s economic status (see back page of your handout). We can think about social class as another cultural identity.

b. Social class concealment
What aspects of yourself might signal your social class?

Ideas: clothing, hobbies/leisurely activities, ability to eat out, family backgrounds (e.g., parents’ or caregivers’ jobs), financial status (e.g., loans), speech, tastes

How are some ways that you have concealed or hidden this?

Ideas: conceal (avoid disclosing), lying, alter how you speak or dress, avoid social interactions

Also listed on page 2 of handout if you want to read examples of what others have experienced.

4. Qualtrics test run
Walk through concealment option

Walk through no-concealment option

Sometimes you might experience the same things and that’s OK, just fill out the report anyway. You can fill out up to 3 events per day.

Here are the daily mood items you will complete both in the AM and PM (no need to fill out).

Do you have any questions?

5. Troubleshooting
a. What might get in the way of you filling out surveys timely?

Options:

- Set recurring alarm on your phones
- Think ahead about conducive place
- If someone interrupts, know that you can put the survey aside

One of us will check in with you if we notice that you missed your survey too. *Survey links: check your spam filter on day 1 if it’s not in your inbox.

6. Summary
a. Main points
Calling on you to observe and share your class experiences nightly and to track your mood twice a day! Thank you so much for helping us out. If you have any questions or issues that come up, please feel contact us.

The 2nd page of the handout also lists some definitions we talked about and provides more examples of class and concealment events – do read them to familiarize yourself further. It can be a helpful resource as you’re filling out the surveys too.

When does survey start: [DATE] You will receive an email or text message Sunday before to remind you.
b. **Researcher contact information**: see back of handout

c. **Any questions?**

d. **Set up payment after week 2.**
Appendix F

Orientation Handout

*Expected times to complete my daily surveys*

Note: Survey is open: 6 – 12noon (morning); 6 – 12 midnight (evening)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Day of the week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*What does social class mean to you?*

*What aspects are related to or signal your social class?*

*How can you conceal or hide these social class aspects?*

*What might get in the way of filling out your surveys? How can you address them?*  
e.g., if someone interrupts you in the middle – you can put it aside for a moment and return to it later
Definitions

Social class identity: A “rich system of cultural expectations, manners, customs, and social norms” grounded a person’s economic status (Kraus & Stephens, 2012, p. 649). We can think about social class as a cultural identity, as you would your racial or sexual identity. The money, education, wealth, etc. you have (i.e., your economic status) influence how you perceive your social status relative to others around you. For example, a student who struggles with poverty and is a first-generation college student may view themselves as having lower social status compared to their peers whose parents have graduated college and/or seem to be wealthy.

Signals of social class: Clothing, hobbies or leisurely activities, social lifestyles (e.g., dining out, traveling, tastes), family backgrounds (e.g., parents’ or caregivers’ jobs, education), financial status (e.g., food stamps, debt, loans), manner of speech, and so forth.

Ways to conceal class: Withholding information (i.e., avoiding disclosure of your personal information), telling “nontruths” or lying, changing how you speak or act, avoiding social interactions.

When and where to conceal, and with whom: Anywhere (classroom, on the bus, dining halls, dorms, social venues), anytime, and anyone! Some research suggests that concealment may increase when you are the minority in a situation (e.g., surrounded by individuals who seem to be of higher social status than you) or if you feel that you might be discriminated against if you shared your social class information.

What are some examples of events that may trigger someone to conceal?
- Others talking about their weekend or holiday plans (e.g., vacations abroad)
- People asking about your family (e.g., where you’re from, your parents’/caregivers’ work)
- People talking about their middle- or upper-class lifestyles and privileges (e.g., expensive family activities)
- Hearing disparaging comments about people who are poor or are less educated

What are some examples of social class concealment?
- You avoid telling others about your parents’ jobs or level of education
- You dress up in ways that allow you to blend in with your friends who are wealthier
- You change the way you speak to sound more like your friends who are wealthier
- You avoid telling others about being poor or being worried about money
- You avoid meeting new people because you’d rather not have to talk about aspects of your social class
- You avoid ordering food at a restaurant to avoid spending money, and say that you’re not hungry.

THANK YOU for sharing your experiences – your engagement makes this project possible! My hope is that we can shed more light on an “invisible” stressor so that we can improve the practices and policies in higher education to better support low-income students to be successful!

If you have any questions or concerns, email me at [email]. My cell is [number] (for any urgent concerns).

Meeting date for week 2 payment: ___________________
Appendix G

Debrief Script

Thanks again for your participation – I really value your effort and would be happy to share any findings later! This study seeks to understand how students conceal aspects of their class backgrounds on a daily basis and test the link between these actions with mood. I hope that we can use these findings to further improve the policies and practices that better support low-income students during college.

Would you like to stay informed of the findings via email? Do you have any feedback that you wish to share about your experience?