



IS LOW SOCIAL CLASS A STIGMATIZED IDENTITY AT WORK?

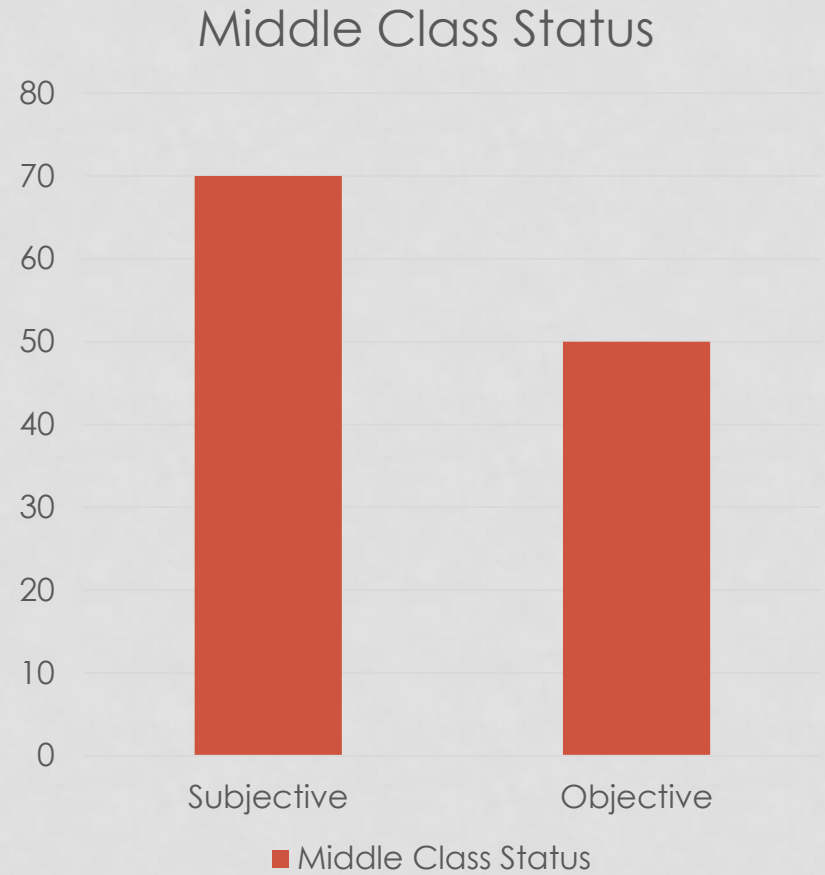
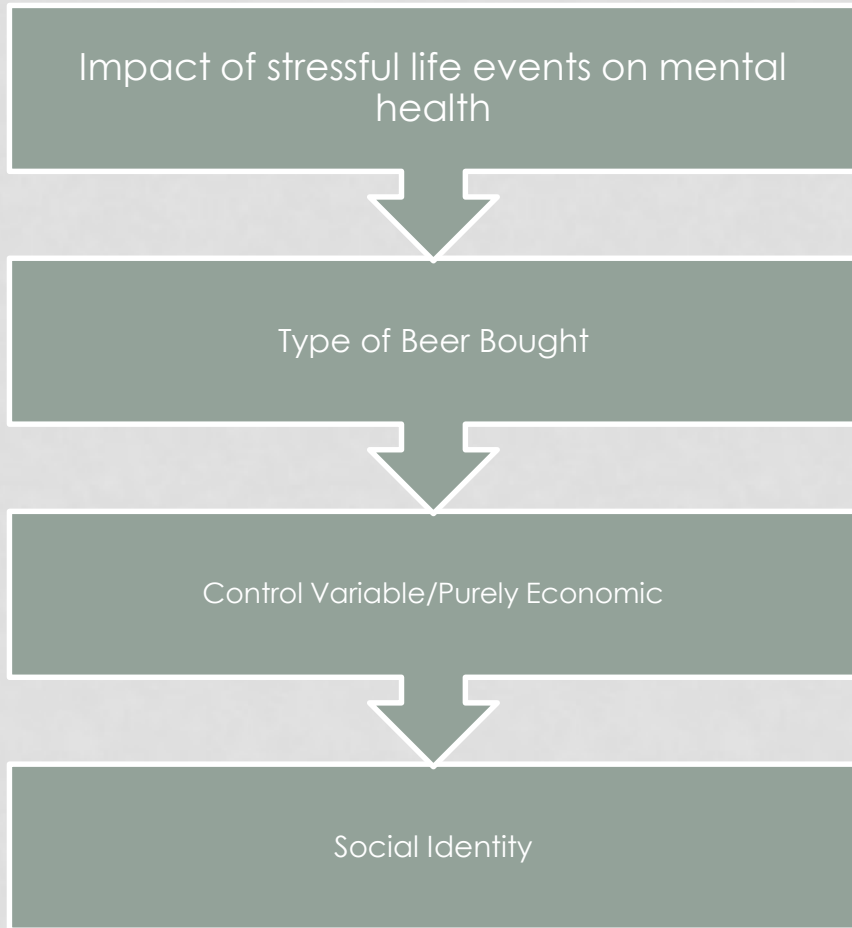
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WHERE IS THE RESEARCH?

- **No research has investigated social class as an identity at work**
- *Kish-Gephart & Campbell (2015): research should address how people who experience social mobility navigate the workplace*
- *Kraus, Tan, & Tannenbaum (2013): Social class Concealment must be investigated for its harms or benefits at work*
- *Williams (2009): Research has not examined if individuals who change social class retain a part of their former class identity*
- *APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status (2006): Called for more qualitative work on social class*



AN OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENT



STIGMATIZED IDENTITY AT WORK

Stereotype Content Model

	Low Competence	High Competence
High Warmth	<i>Pity</i>	<i>Pride</i>
Low Warmth	<i>Disgust</i>	<i>Envy</i>

Traditionally...

	Low Competence	High Competence
High Warmth	<i>Women Elderly Disabled</i>	<i>In-Group Close Friends</i>
Low Warmth	<i>Hispanics Poor Whites Poor Blacks Welfare Recipients</i>	<i>White Males Asians Jews Rich</i>

SOCIAL CLASS AS...

A Stigmatized Identity at Work

A Cause of Identity Management

A Variable in
Intersectionality

A Concealable
stigmatized
identity

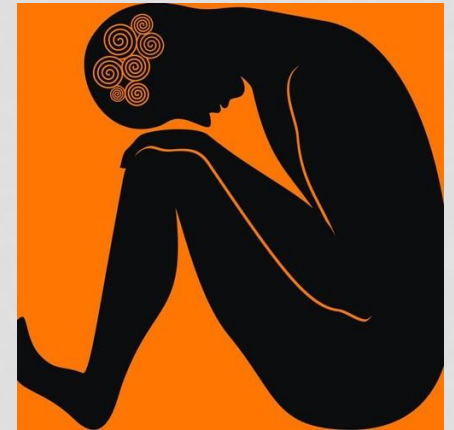
A Concern
for the
Workplace

CONCEALABLE STIGMATIZED IDENTITIES

What gives it away?

- Speech patterns
- Engagement vs. disengagement cues
- Recreational activities
- Neutral faces

Who experiences workplace consequences?



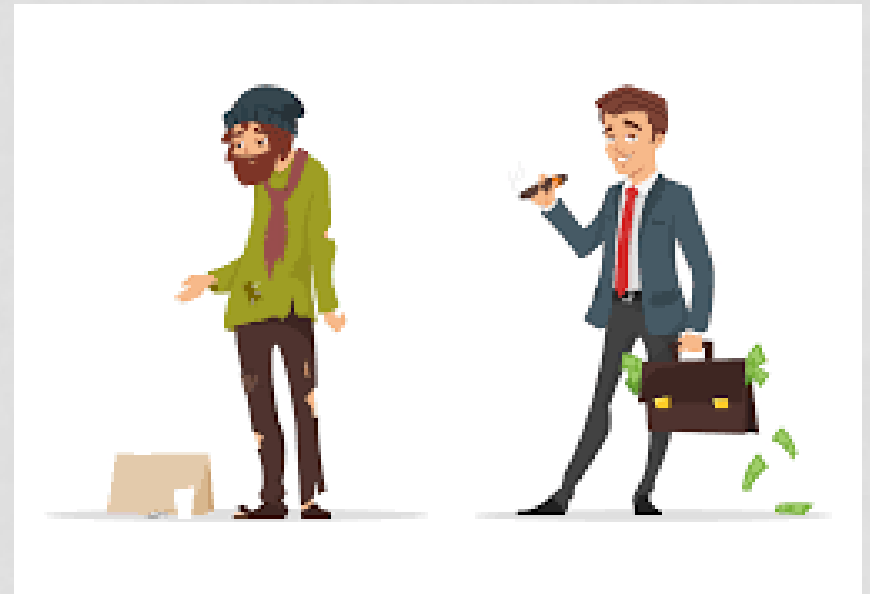


CHILDHOOD SOCIAL CLASS

IMPRINTING THEORY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Research Question 1:** Do employees formerly from income backgrounds strategically conceal and/or disclose their class backgrounds at work? Under what circumstances and to what individuals do employees intentionally conceal or disclose their lower social class background?
- **Research Question 2:** To what extent do formerly lower-income employees accidentally reveal their former social class background through situational cues?



METHODS

Measurement

- Qualitative Methods by Braun & Clarke, (2006)
- Private, one-on-one interviewing
 - 33 interview Questions
 - Past and present class
 - Working conditions
 - Class transitions
 - Disclosure/Concealment Practices
- Thematic Analysis
- 20 White Men
 - Perceived Social Mobility
 - History of Employment
- Recruitment
 - Social media
 - Snowball sampling



If you answered **YES**, you may be eligible to participate in a social class research study. The purpose of this study is to examine when, why, and how people from prior lower socioeconomic status backgrounds move up in social class status, and how they are represented at work.

This is your opportunity to be heard!

There will be a \$20 incentive for your participation or extra credit via Sona.

Interested? Contact Anna Kallschmidt (akall017@fiu.edu) or **(850) 838-7647**

Completely **CONFIDENTIAL & VOLUNTARY**

EMERGING THEMES

Concealing, 70%

- Judgment, 78.6%
- Nobody wants to hear it, nobody understands, 50%
- It's personal, 42.9%
- Pity, 36.7%
- Don't want to feel embarrassed or vulnerable, 21.4%

Disclosure, 95%

- Forced, 73.7%
- To relate, 63.2%
- To motivate/help somebody, 47.4%
- Noticing class cues, 36.8%
- Becoming close, 26.3%

CONCEALING-JUDGMENT (70%)

- If I was introduced as Michael, the guy who makes less than \$30,000 a couple of years ago and is, you know, they knew that history. "Oh, this is the new person that's going to take charge of your children." You know, is that very exciting? Is that very reassuring? Maybe not. And so, I do, I think there are positions in certain career fields that class or the perception of a person's class is important.*

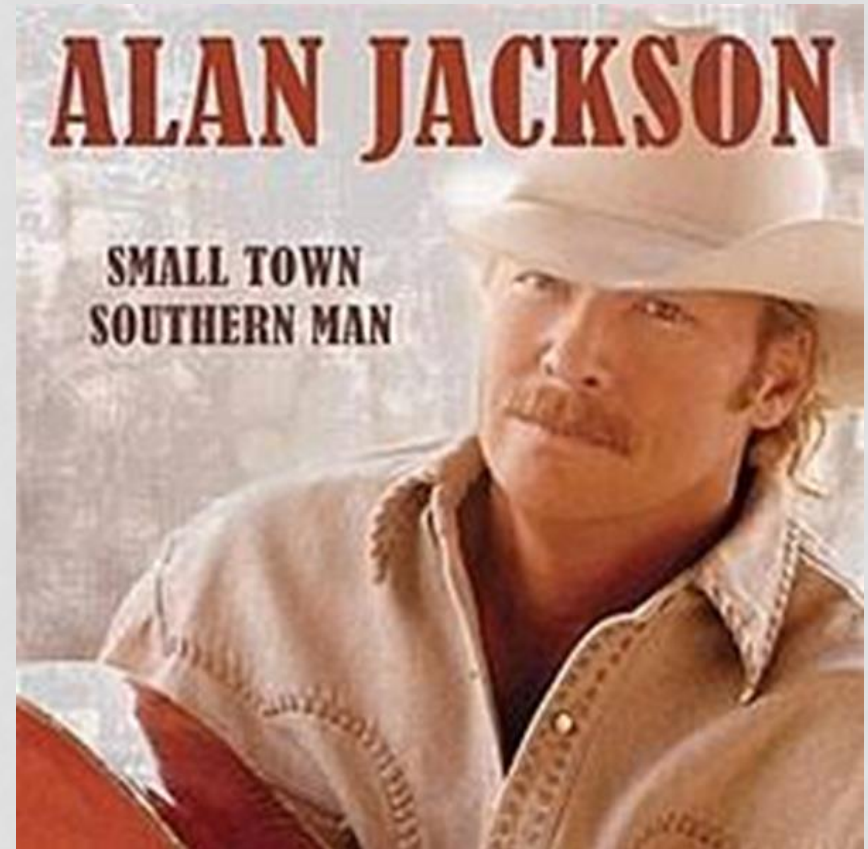
-(Michael, age 32, Key West, "Fee Waiver" to "Lower Middle")



DISCLOSING-CLASS CUES (36.8%)

- “Y’all” “howdy” you know like stuff like that, they’ll be like, and people associate southern slang with dirt poor country bumpkins. Like that’s some of the reactions....But you know like, you can like, facial expressions give people away...you know like eyebrow raise or like pupils get real big, something like that where their body straightens up a little, stuff like, stuff like that, definitely.

-(John, age 21, Tallahassee, “Dirt Poor” to “Lower Middle”)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

- **Research Question 1:** Do employees formerly from lower-class backgrounds strategically conceal and/or disclose their class backgrounds at work? Under what circumstances and to what individuals do employees intentionally conceal or disclose their lower social class background?
- **Research Question 2:** To what extent do formerly lower-class employees accidentally reveal their former social class background through situational cues?

Findings

- Support that lower social class is a stigmatized identity at work for White men.
- Confirms that Individuals attempt to manage their class identity disclosure and concealment
 - 70% concealed
 - 78.6% fear of being judged
 - Consistent with pregnancy disclosure literature
- Disclosure was an ongoing process that varied across time and people
 - Majority unintentional
 - 73.7% felt forced

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

First to identify class as an identity managed at work.

Concealing

- Reduced sense of belonging
- Lower self-esteem
- Lower job satisfaction
- Lower organizational commitment
- Increased work stress
 - Physical ailments

Disclosing

- Relief
- Higher job satisfaction

Future research

- Health implications
- Psychological disturbances
- Specific work outcomes
 - i.e. other identities have increased work fatigue, reduced job performance and motivation
- Intersection with other race and gender identities
- Isolate the class origins



QUESTIONS?

THANK
YOU!

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