Implications of intersecting socioeconomic and racial-ethnic identities for academic achievement and well-being

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Abstract

The evolving study of identity development has become increasingly attentive to the ways that young people think about their socioeconomic and racial-ethnic identities. The status-based identity framework provides one way to analyze the implications of these dynamic identities, particularly as people approach young adulthood. For students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, the experience of socioeconomic mobility can accompany an aversive sense of uncertainty about their own SES, termed status uncertainty, with potential negative implications for their academic behaviors and outcomes. A longitudinal study and experiment demonstrate some of these consequences and suggest how intersections between socioeconomic and racial-ethnic identities may be associated with well-being. This perspective on the

dynamic identities of young people calls for consistent attention to the various levels of context that can be leveraged to support positive development, effective goal pursuit, and desired life trajectories.

Identity has long been the focus of a significant amount of research related to childhood and adolescence (Erikson, 1950, 1968). Over time, this area of research has evolved to take into account how young people's experiences with socioeconomic status (SES) and race-ethnicity must be understood to form a more complete picture of their various identities and the self as a whole. Even early work in social psychology acknowledged the developmental significance of how young people form conceptualizations of their place on the socioeconomic hierarchy (e.g., Centers, 1950). In recent years, a reinvigorated broader interest in how socioeconomic circumstances influence people's psychological experiences (e.g., Fiske, 2011; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2011; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014) has accompanied advances in research on the development and consequences of young people's socioeconomic identities. The current chapter will outline some of these key advances before presenting research from a framework that can be used to study the intersection of multiple identities that are associated with status in society.

1. SOCIOECONOMIC AND RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A socio-ecological perspective on identity development emphasizes the roles that environments and adults play in shaping how young people come to understand their place in the social hierarchy. For example, White, Mistry, and Chow (2013) demonstrated that elementary school teachers are often highly aware of socioeconomic differences between students in diverse classrooms. However, they also often feel unprepared to explicitly address or manage young people's developing understandings of their socioeconomic differences and standings. As a result, children usually make determinations about their SES for themselves by picking up on explicit and implicit cues from those around them.

There are various ways to measure young people's thoughts about their socioeconomic standing or their subjective social status (SSS). Whether assessed by asking students where they place themselves on a ladder representing the socioeconomic hierarchy or by asking them di-

rectly about their perceived relative resources, measures of SSS have psychological and academic consequences above and beyond the consequences of actual socioeconomic resources or objective SES (Diemer, 2015; Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Reimers, 2013). In one study of high school students, those who rated themselves as lower in SSS than their peers experienced more emotional distress, which was in turn associated with poorer study habits and worse grades (Destin, Richman, Varner, & Mandara, 2012).

Adolescent SSS is not a fixed characteristic, though, and it changes over time with consequences for health and well-being (Goodman, Huang, Schafer-Kalkhoff, & Adler, 2007). As early as ages 10–12, children and adolescents can articulate an understanding of their own SSS that is based on their life circumstances, and they also develop attitudes and preferences toward people based on their perceived SES (Durante & Fiske, 2017; Mistry, Brown, White, Chow, & Gillen-O'Neel, 2015). Some studies have demonstrated that SSS during childhood and adolescence can be shaped by a comparison to the SES of others and a proximity to wealthy peers, again with consequences for development (Odgers, 2015).

Subjective social status continues to shape the experiences of young people as they approach young adulthood and pursue higher education (Rubin et al., 2014). Socioeconomic identities become increasingly important aspects of people's overall identities during emerging adulthood, and the influence of these identities extends to young adults' everyday lives and personal trajectories (Aries & Seider, 2007; Thomas & Azmitia, 2014). For post-secondary students from lower SES backgrounds, college can be an experience of social mobility that accompanies feelings of conflict between various aspects of their socioeconomic identities, with consequences for their achievement and well-being (Destin & Debrosse, 2017; Herrmann & Varnum, 2018).

In parallel to the growing body of research on socioeconomic identities, there is a more developed tradition of research on racial-ethnic identity and racial-ethnic identity development. These studies often quantify the extent to which people describe their race or ethnicity as central to their overall identity and how positively they view membership in their racial or ethnic group (e.g., Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006). Studies have also demonstrated the role of racial-ethnic socialization and how messages from parents shape young people's thoughts and feelings about their racial or ethnic group membership (e.g.,

Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2008; Seaton, Yip, Morgan-Lopez, & Sellers, 2012). In addition to documenting systematically different socialization processes by racial-ethnic group membership (e.g., Caughy & Owen, 2015; Hughes, 2003; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008), research in this area has also shown that patterns of racial-ethnic socialization vary meaningfully by family SES (e.g., Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; White-Johnson, Ford, & Sellers, 2010). As a whole, work that is focused on racial-ethnic identity development has advanced insight into the unique and adaptive ways that children from various backgrounds are socialized to see themselves and respond to both opportunities and risks in their environment (Perez-Brena, Rivas-Drake, Toomey, & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). This environmental responsiveness inherently includes a consideration of how social position is linked to both race and SES, in addition to their unique combinations. Given the overlap in research between socioeconomic and racial-ethnic identities, efforts to understand the experiences of young people by investigating intersections between these two aspects of their identities are likely to be fruitful. The status-based identity framework provides one potential conceptual lens that can be used to advance research at the intersection of socioeconomic and racial-ethnic identities.

2. STATUS-BASED IDENTITY FRAMEWORK

The concept of status-based identity attempts to capture the dynamic and subjective understanding that people have of the multiple aspects of their lives that contribute to their position on the socioeconomic hierarchy. In particular, status-based identity includes three broad components: first, narrative identity, or the way that people construct the stories of their lives and make sense of the experiences that led them to their current circumstances (see McAdams & McLean, 2013); second, social identity, or how people think about the groups that they belong to in society and the status that they afford (see Hogg, 2006); and third, future identity, or how people imagine that their life will unfold in the years to come (see Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Because status-based identity is dynamic and composed of many factors, people vary in the extent to which they have a clear and stable understanding of where they fall on the socioeconomic hierarchy or whether they experience an aversive sense of status uncertainty.

The dominant theoretical and empirical conceptualizations of status-based identity and status uncertainty have emphasized how these aspects of identity are connected to a person's socioeconomic circumstances in unique and malleable ways. Emerging research suggests that status-based identity and status uncertainty have consequences for achievement and well-being (Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, & Richeson, 2017), but also that these conceptualizations of identity may have important intersections with racial and ethnic identity. Similar ideas can apply to the connections between race-ethnicity and identity because like SES, race and ethnicity are also highly associated with status in society in dynamic ways that are shaped by context and experiences (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, Kim, & Marshall, 1987).

The college context is especially relevant to identity development among young adults, and in particular, students who are seeking upward mobility. Because college can be a period of socioeconomic mobility and status change, it provides an opportune developmental period to study status-based identity and status uncertainty. A college education can accompany the opportunity for people from lower SES backgrounds to move into a higher SES group in society and to acquire the associated wealth and benefits (e.g., Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). However, low SES students who reach selective four-year colleges and universities can encounter a host of unexpected and disheartening obstacles that uniquely decrease their likelihood of fully expressing their academic potential in college (see Walpole, 2003). A growing body of research has illuminated some of these social and psychological obstacles (Browman & Destin, 2016; Croizet & Claire, 1998; Harackiewicz, Canning, Tibbetts, Priniski, & Hyde, 2016; Johnson, Richeson, & Finkel, 2011; Rheinschmidt & Mendoza-Denton, 2014; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014), and the concept of status-based identity helps to organize and advance research on the experience of socioeconomic mobility (Destin & Debrosse, 2017; Destin et al., 2017). The status-based identity framework draws a connection between research on identity and research on SES in order to investigate the subjective experience of socioeconomic mobility that students from low SES backgrounds encounter during college as they potentially move from one socioeconomic group toward another.

When students pursue a college education, they enter an entirely new social environment, with specific cultural norms and practices (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). If they come from a low SES background, not only

does this higher status context feel foreign, but it is also likely to lead them to question aspects of their own identity. For instance, they may feel increasingly distant from their status of origin, but they are also unlikely to feel secure in their new higher status position (Destin et al., 2017). This phenomenon of status uncertainty captures the disintegration of an individual's understanding of where they come from (narrative identity), what groups they belong to (social identity), and their trajectory in life (future identity). These processes may be exacerbated for members of racial-ethnic groups that are minoritized in college contexts and face multiple layers of prejudice and discrimination that are likely to shape and interact with aspects of their broader narrative, social, and future identities (e.g., Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Cole & Omari, 2003; Hamilton, Darity, Price, Sridharan, & Tippett, 2015; Krieger et al., 2011; Lang & Manove, 2011).

A cohesive narrative identity, a robust social identity, and a clear future identity predict high levels of academic motivation and well-being (Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, & Houle, 2016; Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Therefore, a subjective sense of security in one's own overarching status-based identity is an important resource that may help students to remain motivated to pursue academic goals and to cope with academic challenges, especially during the experience of socioeconomic mobility in college. In contrast, feelings of uncertainty about SES should decrease students' motivation to engage in certain academic behaviors necessary to cope with challenges. Finally, students from lower SES backgrounds are likely to experience more status uncertainty during college than students from higher SES backgrounds, with corresponding negative implications for their academic experiences and outcomes.

We conducted a longitudinal study and an experiment to test these potential consequences of status uncertainty with an emphasis on SES. The samples in these studies do not contain the racial-ethnic diversity necessary to test the potential intersectional implications of status-based identity and status uncertainty. Following a summary of these approaches, we review a study that moves toward a consideration of the intersections between SES and race-ethnicity along with a discussion of the implications and potential for future research.

3. LONGITUDINAL STUDY

We evaluated the hypothesized relationships between SES, status uncertainty, academic motivation, and academic outcomes in a longitudinal study of students during their first 2 years of college. We expected that lower SES students would experience more status uncertainty than higher SES students during college, which in turn would predict decreased academic motivation and belief in their own academic success, with potential consequences for their academic achievement.

We analyzed data from a larger, ongoing longitudinal study with college students from the first quarter of their freshman year to the end of their second year in college in order to investigate the relationships between SES, status uncertainty, academic motivation, and outcomes during college.[a] Among 152 students who were recruited at the beginning of their freshmen year to participate in a longitudinal survey, 133 undergraduates completed a follow-up survey at the end of their second year of college (53% women; 76% White or Asian/Asian-American). Specifically, participants completed one survey during the fall quarter of their freshman year (Time 1), another survey during the spring quarter of their second year (Time 2), and their grades were collected from university administrative records at the end of their second year (Time 3). The target sample size was 125–150 participants based on the sample size and correlations observed between relevant variables in prior research (Destin et al., 2017). We administered a pre-screening survey in order to recruit both lower- and higher-income students. Participants received $15 in compensation for completing each survey.

3.1. Measures

Participants indicated their family's annual household income during the Time 1 survey using the following scale: 1 = *$25,000 or less*, 2 = *$25,001–$40,000*, 3 = *$40,001–$70,000*, 4 = *$70,001–$90,000*, 5 = *$90,001–$120,000*, 6 = *$120,001–$150,000*, 7 = *$150,001–$200,000*, 8 = *$200,001–$300,000*, 9 = *$300,000 or more* (*M* = 4.98, *SD* = 2.58). The mean family income of the sample was consistent with the average household income in the university's student population, and we recruited an adequate representation of participants across all income

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[a] For simplicity, the current analyses focus exclusively on the variables of interest rather than to include any number of other related predictor or control variables.

groups. Participants completed the 11-item measure of status uncertainty (Destin et al., 2017) on a 7-point scale ranging from *1* = Strongly disagree to *7* = Strongly agree at Time 2 (sample item, "In general, I have a clear sense of where I stand in society" (reverse-scored); $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = 0.90$). In order to evaluate the potential role of students' general feelings regarding their ability to succeed, participants completed an 11-item measure of academic efficacy at Time 2 (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992; sample item, "How well can you motivate yourself to do coursework?"; 1 = *Not well at all*, 6 = *Very well*, $M_{\text{time 1}} = 4.40$, $SD_{\text{time 1}} = 0.75$, $\alpha = 0.65$; $M_{\text{time 2}} = 5.02$, $SD_{\text{time 2}} = 1.42$, $\alpha = 0.85$). Students' grades in all of their classes were collected at Time 3 and a cumulative GPA was calculated at the end of their second year ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.29$).

3.2. Results

We evaluated a path model using R version 3.3.2 and RStudio version 1.0.136 to test the hypothesized relationship between students' family income levels, status uncertainty, academic efficacy, and academic outcomes as depicted in Fig. 1. In this model, all tested pathways were statistically significant and the indirect effect from family income to GPA was marginally significant. The direct effect from family income to GPA was not significant suggesting that the differences in the psychological processes and experiences of college students from different backgrounds may be more relevant than any possible implications that may or may not emerge based on students' actual academic performance (Table 1).

In addition to the connection between status uncertainty and general feelings of academic efficacy, there are three more specific domains where status uncertainty might inhibit students' motivation to engage in particular academic behaviors. First, feeling uncertain about one's own SES may lead a student to devote less time to independently studying
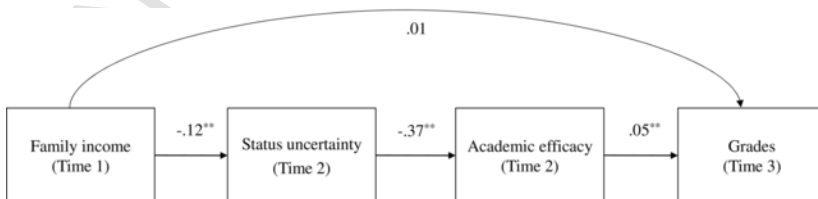

Fig. 1. Path analyses results for longitudinal study.

TABLE 1 Path analysis results for longitudinal study.

	b	S.E.	*z*	*P*
Family income (Time 1) → Status uncertainty (Time 2)	− 0.12	0.04	− 3.07	0.002
Status uncertainty (Time 2) → Academic efficacy (Time 2)	− 0.37	0.13	− 2.95	0.003
Academic efficacy (Time 2) → Grades (Time 3)	0.05	0.02	2.57	0.010
Family income (Time 1) → Grades (Time 3)	0.01	0.01	1.06	0.288
Indirect effect: Family income (Time 1) → Status uncertainty (Time 2) → Academic efficacy (Time 2) → Grades (Time 3)	0.002	0.001	1.64	0.101

CFI = 1.000, RMSEA < 0.001, $\chi^2(2, 107) = 0.596$, $P = 0.742$.

and completing schoolwork. Status uncertainty is subtle and difficult to articulate, meaning that students are unlikely to fully understand their discomfort, which can distract from everyday schoolwork. Second, status uncertainty might inhibit students from engaging with their peers and seeking informal resources to support their studies. When students are unsure about their own SES, it becomes even more difficult to determine who might share a common socioeconomic background or experience with them. It may then feel unsafe to approach other students and workgroups for fear of revealing an undesirable level of status or ability. Third, uncertainty about one's own SES might lead students to avoid interacting with instructors. Students who feel low in status are less likely to confidently engage with professors and teaching assistants during college (e.g., Destin, Manzo, & Townsend, 2018; Kim & Sax, 2009), and status uncertainty might instigate a similar hesitancy toward engaging with experts and authority.

4. STATUS UNCERTAINTY EXPERIMENT

In an experiment, we examined whether an aversive sense of uncertainty about one's own SES negatively affects these more specific academic behavioral intentions of low SES college students. College students were randomly assigned to conditions inducing temporarily high or low levels of uncertainty about their SES. Then, we assessed the immedi-

ate effect of status uncertainty on students' approaches toward key school behaviors that occur independently, with their peers, and with instructors. Two hundred and one undergraduates (73% women; 74% White or Asian/Asian-American) participated in the study for $15 compensation. Prior research with similar manipulations suggested a sample size of at least 100 participants (Hohman & Hogg, 2015; Petrocelli, Martin, & Li, 2010; Smith, James, Varnum, & Oyserman, 2014), which we doubled in anticipation of a small effect on our self-reported dependent variables. We administered a pre-screening survey to sample students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, by asking participants to indicate their family's annual household income using the same scale as the longitudinal study ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 2.35$). We recruited second and third year students, given that they were more likely to be influenced by a momentary experimental manipulation of status uncertainty than students who were closer to status transitions (first and fourth year students).

4.1. Procedure

The participants began an online survey about student life in which the experimental manipulation was embedded. Using the Qualtrics survey program, participants were randomly assigned to complete an experimental manipulation that temporarily induced feelings of high or low status uncertainty. Next, the participants completed self-report measures relevant to their anticipated academic behaviors at the individual, peer, and faculty levels.

In order to lead participants to momentarily experience relatively high or low levels of status uncertainty, we used a forced-agreement scale paradigm. As shown in previous research across various domains, forced-agreement scales influence people's feelings, beliefs, or attitudes by restricting how they answer relevant survey items in a way that subtly guides them to agree or disagree with certain statements depending on the condition (Petrocelli & Dowd, 2009; Petrocelli et al., 2010). For our purposes, we adapted three items from the status uncertainty scale (Destin et al., 2017) to create a forced-agreement scale. First, participants were prompted to "describe a time when the world felt uncertain" or to "describe a time when the world felt certain," in order to increase the salience of uncertainty or certainty, depending on condition. Following previous research, we then presented participants with items that were phrased to affirm or disaffirm feelings of status uncertainty in the high and low conditions, respectively. Participants responded to each item on

a separate webpage, using a scale from 1 = *Somewhat agree* to 4 = *Strongly agree*. Qualifiers (e.g., sometimes, rarely) were added to the original items to encourage stronger endorsement (sample item, "My beliefs about where I stand in society sometimes conflict with one another"). The online survey paused on each page ostensibly to allow the next item to load; these delays are thought to allow the participant time to justify their reason for agreement (Petrocelli et al., 2010).

4.2. Measures

As a measure of individual-oriented academic behavioral intentions, participants indicated how many hours they planned to spend engaged in several activities in the next 7 days, including "studying alone in your room" and "studying alone outside your room," and several other filler activities (Destin & Oyserman, 2009). A sum score of the two studying items was computed as an indicator of planned individual academic behaviors ($M = 21.77$, $SD = 15.24$).

As a measure of peer-oriented academic behavioral intentions, participants indicated how comfortable they would feel asking several groups of people for help with an academic problem. A mean score of their responses regarding roommates, friends, and informal study groups was computed as an indicator of each student's feelings about engaging in academic behaviors related to peer interactions (1 = *Extremely anxious*, 7 = *Extremely comfortable*, $M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.91$, $\alpha = 0.75$).

As a measure of faculty-oriented academic behavioral intentions, participants indicated how often they intended to make use of university resources between now and the end of the current academic year, including professor office hours and teaching assistant office hours. A mean score of their likelihood of visiting professor office hours and teaching assistant office hours was computed as an indicator of planned academic behaviors toward faculty (1 = *Never*, 7 = *All the time*, $M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.20$, $\alpha = 0.81$).

Participants completed three status uncertainty items on a regular agreement scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) as a manipulation check ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.78$, $\alpha = 0.76$). They also completed the scale of general self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996) for a test of the discriminant validity of the experimental manipulation ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.19$, $\alpha = 0.91$).[b]

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[b] Participants completed other survey measures related to student life and well-being that are not included in this report.

4.3. Results

We conducted a series of *t*-tests using R version 3.3.2 and RStudio version 1.0.136 to test whether random assignment to experience high vs. low feelings of uncertainty about their SES influenced participants' feelings of uncertainty regarding their SES and their planned academic behaviors at the individual, peer, and instructor levels. We used all available data for each analysis, so sample sizes vary slightly across outcomes.

First, the manipulation check revealed that the experimental manipulation was successful. Participants randomly assigned to the high status uncertainty condition reported significantly greater levels of status uncertainty ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.82$) than participants randomly assigned to the low status uncertainty condition ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.72$), $t(199) = -2.16$, $P = 0.032$, $d = -0.31$. Analyses also indicated that the manipulation was specific to status uncertainty, given that it did not significantly affect participants' general self-concept clarity, a measure of their general feelings of self-relevant certainty or uncertainty $t(197) = 1.56$, $P = 0.120$.

Next, we tested whether random assignment to experimental condition affected participants' intentions to engage in school behaviors at the individual, peer, and instructor levels. There was a marginal effect of status uncertainty on plans for individual studying, $t(197) = 1.91$, $P = 0.058$, $d = 0.27$. As shown in Fig. 2, participants randomly assigned to experience greater status uncertainty were less motivated to engage in individual study behaviors ($M = 19.70$, $SD = 13.42$) than those who were randomly assigned to experience lower status uncertainty ($M = 23.82$, $SD = 16.67$). At the peer level, status uncertainty condition had a significant effect on participants' comfort in engaging with informal and peer academic opportunities, $t(198) = -2.14$, $P = 0.033$, $d = -0.30$. Participants randomly assigned to experience greater status uncertainty were less comfortable engaging in peer level academic behaviors ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.92$) than those who were randomly assigned to experience lower status uncertainty ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 0.89$; see Fig. 2). Last, status uncertainty condition had a marginal effect on participants' plans to engage with faculty, $t(200) = -1.61$, $P = 0.108$, $d = -0.23$. Participants who were randomly assigned to experience greater status uncertainty were less inclined to visit professors or teaching assistants during office hours ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.25$) than those in the low status uncertainty condition ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.13$; see Fig. 2).
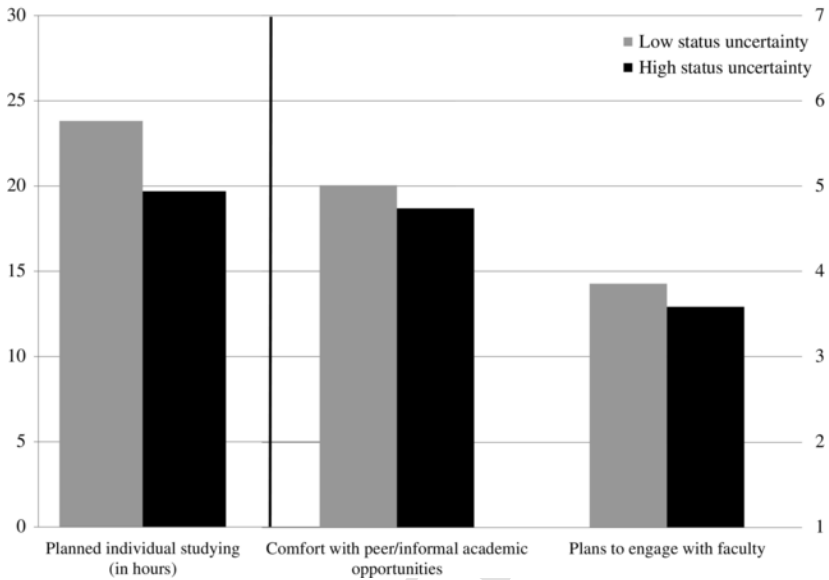
Fig. 2. Effects of status uncertainty condition on individual, peer, and faculty level academic intentions.

Consistent with our predictions, an experimentally induced sense of uncertainty about SES decreased the motivation of students to engage in important school behaviors at the individual, peer, and faculty levels. Status uncertainty had the strongest negative effects on students' feelings about engaging with peer and informal academic opportunities. Together, the results of the longitudinal and experimental studies provide insight into the ways that feelings of uncertainty about one's SES influence the academic motivation and experiences of college students. The longitudinal study linked status uncertainty to a family's income level. Students from lower-income families, who are likely in the midst of socioeconomic mobility during college, felt greater levels of status uncertainty than their peers from higher-income families. Uncertainty about their SES during college was associated with weaker beliefs about their own abilities to succeed, which was associated with marginally lower grades. In the experiment, when students were induced to feel more uncertain about their SES, they became especially unlikely to engage with their peers and informal academic resources that are an important part of succeeding in college. Together, these studies support the hypothesis that students' feelings of uncertainty about their SES can be a destabilizing

force that undermines motivation and the ability to pursue academic goals, particularly for students from lower SES backgrounds.

The study demonstrates how the complex combination of factors that determine how well a student can understand and define their place in society influences their academic experiences and outcomes. This opens the door for work to explicitly investigate the intersection of young people's understandings of their own SES with their understandings of other consequential aspects of identity, such as racial or ethnic group membership. A recent study tested novel hypotheses about how socioeconomic and racial-ethnic identities interact to shape the experiences of low SES Latina college students.

5. INTERSECTING SOCIOECONOMIC AND RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITIES

Castillo-Lavergne and Destin (2019) recruited a sample of 98 Latina students attending 4-year colleges across the country to participate in a cross-sectional study. Participants were predominantly from low-income backgrounds and/or the first in their family to attend college. They completed a survey including the measure of status uncertainty in addition to the ethnic identity scale, a measure of racial-ethnic identity (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015). Participants also completed a one-item Rosenberg self-esteem question (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001) and the satisfaction with life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985) as measures of their psychological well-being. The study hypothesis was that the negative relationship between status uncertainty and well-being observed in other research (see Destin et al., 2017) might be attenuated by a strong identification with participants' racial-ethnic group.

As predicted Castillo-Lavergne and Destin (2019) did observe a negative relationship between status uncertainty and well-being where low SES Latina college students who felt less clear about their place on the socioeconomic hierarchy expressed lower self-esteem and lower satisfaction with life. Ethnic identity was not a significant predictor of well-being, but the interaction between status uncertainty and ethnic identity did predict both indicators of well-being at a marginal level of statistical significance. Interestingly, the pattern of the interaction differed from the original study hypothesis. For those who were high in ethnic identity, status uncertainty was a stronger predictor of worse well-being than for

those who were low in ethnic identity. At the same time, for those who were low in ethnic identity, status uncertainty was less predictive of well-being. So, ethnic identity did not buffer against the negative consequences of status uncertainty. Rather, those who were high in ethnic identity and low in status uncertainty showed the highest levels of psychological well-being (Fig. 3).

The observed interaction between a measure of socioeconomic identity and a measure of racial-ethnic identity should be considered a starting point for much more theory and research regarding this particular intersection of identities. Because identities are constantly reconstructed depending on aspects of the context, there are numerous possibilities for how young people's ideas about their race, ethnicity, and SES shape their experiences within certain domains like education. For those who aim to support young people through critical developmental periods and transitions, systemic approaches that address multiple levels of context (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, teachers, parents, peers) provide the best route to holistically engage the dynamic, intersecting identities that influence achievement and well-being. For example, a program focused at the student level aiming to reinforce students' racial-ethnic identities (e.g., Umaña-Taylor, Douglass, Updegraff, & Marsiglia, 2018) might be partnered with a program at the teacher level aiming to help teachers foster students' developing thoughts about the future and their place in society (e.g., Horowitz, Sorensen, Yoder, & Oyserman, 2018). Additional research is necessary to understand how multiple levels of context can be
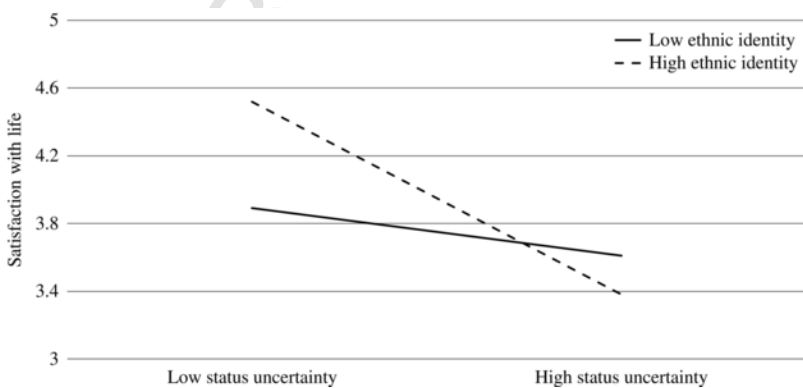

Fig. 3. The interaction between status uncertainty and ethnic identity in predicting satisfaction with life. All variables plotted at ± 1 SD. *From Castillo-Lavergne, C., & Destin, M. (2019). How the intersections of ethnic and socioeconomic identities are associated with well-being during college. Journal of Social Issues, (manuscript under revision).*

engaged in a coordinated way to meaningfully harness students' developing racial-ethnic, socioeconomic, and various other unique combinations of identities over time.

Additional research could also delve into the suggested possible dynamic connections between aspects of status-based identity or status uncertainty and racial-ethnic identity development. In particular, how do experiences of power, privilege, and oppression in various contexts shape the simultaneous development of young people's understandings of their socioeconomic status and race-ethnicity? To what extent do they experience and articulate these identities as interconnected and how does that influence their pursuit of goals in life? Advancement of research in these areas may better equip practitioners and policymakers to leverage the individual and community strengths of young people as they face society's evolving challenges.

6. CONCLUSION

The increasing complexity in our understanding of how young people develop socioeconomic identities inherently establishes a foundation for more research on the intersections between multiple, interconnected identities related to status in society. The increasing complexity also serves as a reminder that multidisciplinary and multimethod approaches are best suited to deeply interrogate how omnipresent historical and sociopolitical contexts can be more explicitly incorporated into psychological conceptualizations of identity. At the same time, psychology continues to contribute a critical analysis of the links between socially constructed identities and the individual experiences, behaviors, and outcomes of young people. A continued investigation of these factors sheds greater light on mechanisms that can both perpetuate and interrupt persistent inequality along the intersecting lines of class, race, and other dimensions of sociodemographics and identity.

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