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The Impact of Social Class Connectedness, School Belongingness, and Family Cohesion on Lower Class-Identified College Students

Kristen Eileen Adams
Loyola University Chicago

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CLASS CONNECTEDNESS, SCHOOL

BELONGINGNESS, AND FAMILY COHESION ON LOWER CLASS-IDENTIFIED

COLLEGE STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY

KRISTEN E. ADAMS

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It has been a long process in getting to this stage, and while it's felt solitary at times, I did not get here on my own. There are too many people who have touched my life throughout my academic and clinical-training endeavors, and with that, I cannot possibly include everyone. Know that I have been impacted in some way by each and every person that I have interacted with over the course of my undergraduate and graduate training.

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And finally, I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my niece Evelyn and my nephew Nathaniel. I will forever encourage you both to chase after your dreams.

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ABSTRACT

This study is one of the first to examine acculturative and enculturative factors as they relate to social class. Much of the extant literature surrounding acculturation and enculturation looks primarily at cultural factors such as race/ethnicity and/or immigration status. Due to the fact that social class is such a salient cultural identity in most individuals' lives and has a bearing on how one views and evaluates themselves in relation to others of differing social classes (Fouad & Brown, 2000), the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social class connectedness on subjective wellbeing (including positive and negative affect and satisfaction with life) and whether or not school belongingness and family cohesion mediated this relationship for lower class-identified college students. Mediated regression analyses indicated that school belongingness mediates the relationship between middle class connectedness and subjective wellbeing. Additionally, it was found that family cohesion is positively related to subjective wellbeing. Clinical implications of these findings, future research directions, and study limitations are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In his seminal piece, Tajfel (1974) explains the dynamics, importance, and implications of intergroup behavior based on social identities. He expounds upon the notions of in-group and out-group belongingness, outlining the significance of a group's social position when compared amongst each other, as well as the fluidity and ability to move throughout various groups within an identity. In-group/out-group theory and behavior pays special attention to intergroup social comparisons, which states that: 1) the more dominant social groups and their individuals will maintain their superior position of power unless they are to become overwhelmingly threatened by the uprising of a less superior group, which is deemed unlikely; and 2) there should be enough social flexibility amongst groups to allow for individuals in the inferior social groups to move into more superior ones (Tajfel, 1974; Sonn & Fisher, 2003). While social mobility may be achievable for those in the inferior groups, Tajfel (1974) explains that "after having joined the superior group, or even before, some individuals will work harder than most at establishing their clear-cut distinctiveness from their perceived inadequacies of their past social identity" (p. 81). Throughout the field of psychology, the theory on intergroup behavior maintains a significant amount of clout as it serves as a strong basis for the foundation of various practical applications as it relates to cultural identities (Sonn & Fisher, 2003; Tajfel, 1981).

Fouad and Brown (2000) utilize the framework of intergroup behavior to construct their theory of differential status identity (DSI). This theory closely examines social class as a psychological construct and states that individuals who occupy nonordinant positions in social groups are likely to experience greater psychological consequences of their status, as compared to members who maintain status in ordinant social groups. As such, members of the declared inferior group are often subject to measure themselves up against the supposed superior group and make social comparisons as a result. Since social identity theory and self-categorization theory have already taught social scientists that group membership can become a part of the self through internalization (Smith, 1999; Tajfel, 1981), the notion that individuals compare themselves to others based on their social class position can have deleterious outcomes on one's identity and their subsequent social and emotional functioning (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

Past and recent literature highlight the implications of group comparison and the negative internalization of various cultural identity groups impacting one's psychological sense of self (Sonn & Fisher, 2003). But, until the beginning of the twenty-first century, much of this research has focused on cultural reference groups other than social class (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Wentworth & Peterson, 2001). In 2007, Aries and Seider highlighted the importance that social class has on an individual's life experience. They argue that social class position differentiates people's experiences and the way in which they view the world, as well as emphasizes how social class impacts the way in which individuals interact with others around them. Given these sentiments, and coupled up

with intergroup behavior theory, it is understandable how individuals in subordinate

social classes may internalize feelings of inferiority, and ultimately exhibit a poorer sense

of wellbeing.

In the past two decades or so, social class research has received much deserved

attention, albeit not yet sufficient enough. There are currently several prolific scholars in

the field of counseling psychology who are examining the nuanced behaviors and unique

customs associated with social class as a specific cultural reference group (Liu, 2013). As

such, attention has been given to various factors in identity formation of individuals from

particular social classes, as well as the effects and impact that identifying with a certain

social class group may have on an individual (Thompson, 2008). Unfortunately, there is

still much research that is needed in this area. For one, it is important to examine beyond

how one identifies their social class group, and instead, look into the level of importance

that one's connectivity to this group may potentially have on an individual. While extant

research has highlighted both the positive and negative impact that one's social class

identity may have on one's overall wellbeing (Aries & Seider, 2007), it is necessary to

examine this relationship in greater depth.

In recent decades, there has been an upsurge of individuals identifying as working

or lower class that are now attending 4-year colleges and universities for the first time

(Aries & Seider, 2007). As such, this can interfere with a person's sense of wellbeing due

to the difficulties that may arise from one's transition from a culture that holds

predominantly working or lower class values (i.e. family) to a new environment that

typically subscribes to middle class ideals (i.e. institutions of higher education) (London,

1989; Bryan & Simmons, 2009). As a result, there is the potential that these individuals may experience a nebulous sense of belonging to both their home culture and their new school environment, which can have deleterious outcomes on how they evaluate their subjective life experiences, as well as their overall emotional wellbeing (Navarette Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Therefore, this study sought to exam how various levels of social connectedness (e.g. toward social class groups, family of origin, and school community) impacts the overall wellbeing of college students that identify as coming for a working or lower class background.

Experiences of Social Class

In examining social class as it relates to one's wellbeing, it is important to differentiate one's objective experience of class versus one's subjective experience. Dating back to 1922, Weber maintained that a group of people belong to a class when they have a common component in their life that directly relates to economic interests, such as property, income, and/or market situations. He concluded that particular class membership helps shape one's life experience in that it influences their experiences, opportunities, and constraints. From this theory, much of the psychological literature has used objective markers as a measure of social class. Indicators such as income, wealth, education level, and occupational prestige have gone on to commonly serve as measures of social class (Diemer & Ali, 2009). While objective markers are helpful in categorizing a particular cultural group, it is necessary to point out the grave injustice this does by denying individuals' subjective experiences of social class. Instead, these markers would be best served to describe socio-economic status, which is an objective measure of class

that denotes power, prestige, and control over resources (Diemer & Ali, 2009). As such, the current movement in social class literature places a greater emphasis on one's psychological experience of social class as a predictor of various other outcomes (Sosnaud, Brady, & Frenk, 2013).

Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, and Pickett. (2004) outline the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM), which takes into account the subjective perception of differences within and between social class groups. They go on to suggest that people internalize messages about their respective social class, which, in turn, influence how they feel about themselves and others. Once these views are adopted, social class worldview helps people navigate their environment so that they are in accordance with others of a similarly perceived social class. This goes on to influence their social class behaviors (e.g. manner, etiquette, language accents), life style considerations (e.g. how one spends time), and relationship to material objects (Sanchez, Liu, Leathers, Goins, and Vilain, 2011). Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, Lopez, and Reimers (2013) indicate that subjective social status is one's perception of his or her social class and that it is best used as a psychological construct to measure against a host of outcomes. Given this, they argue that having a strong sense of one's social status is often associated with more positive outcomes. In general, social class as it relates to wellbeing is largely dependent upon a sense of connectedness to a particular social class group. As such, individuals often express a strong desire to identify with a social class that is valued by others (Bullock & Limbert, 2003) which, in turn will influence their general sense of belonging to a particular setting or group (Ostrove & Long, 2007).

The origins of intergroup behavior theory explicitly states that individuals in inferior groups would make room for themselves to move into a more superior one (Tajfel, 1974). Though social mobility in relation to social class has always been a topic thoroughly explored and referenced, it is receiving continued attention in current U.S. society due to a continually broadening and changing political environment. With greater access being granted to higher educational institutions to those from traditionally underserved and underprivileged economic backgrounds, a college education is becoming more attainable to those who at one time were often overlooked (Aries & Seider, 2007; Schwartz, 2009). Research has indicated that social mobility impacts individuals who move into more privileged positions, by significantly affecting their identity through a change in their judgments, tastes, opinions, preferences and practices (Aries & Seider, 2007; Stewart & Ostrove, 1993). This sentiment is likely to have great significance on those from the lower social classes who are attending college, which has traditionally been reserved for the middle and upper classes.

Traditionally, the middle class, with its competencies and knowledge, have differed from those of the working and lower classes, and as such, has been perceived as superior (Lawler, 1999). According to Tajfel's (1974) theory outlining intergroup behavior and social comparison, the middle class is typically seen as the dominant social group with a superior social position, whereas the working and lower classes are seen as the subordinate social group with an inferior social position. Many times being a member of a subordinate cultural group has led to deleterious outcomes, such as deteriorated mental health and decreased satisfaction with life (Aries & Seider, 2007). But, it is

important to highlight that being a member of the working and lower classes does not automatically lead to lower feelings of self-worth and other negative outcomes. Instead, members of subordinate groups can develop self-protective strategies that can help buffer themselves against the prejudice of others, and affirm their personal identities to provide a sense of self-worth and self-respect (Crocker & Major, 1989; Snow & Anderson, 1987). Such strategies are important aspects of identity formation and can include the adoption of a particular ideology and worldview (Arnett, 2000, as cited in Aries & Seider, 2007). Self-protective strategies with regard to social class can take on several forms. For instance, a self-identified working or lower class individual may view themselves as privileged in comparison to those experiencing extreme poverty or homelessness (Aries & Seider, 2007). As such, the way in which an individual views their social class position and how connected they feel to this cultural group would likely have an effect on an individual's overall functioning. This leads to the question of social class connectedness and whether acculturative class connectedness (e.g. connectedness to the middle class) and enculturative class connectedness (e.g. connectedness to the working and lower class) have an effect on one's wellbeing.

Social Connectedness and Social Class

Connectedness has been difficult to operationalize and has seen several different conceptualizations. Most often, terms used to describe this phenomenon include: connection, bonding, sense of belonging, sense of community, sense of relatedness, and attachment (Libbey, 2004). When examining the idea of connectedness as it relates to a particular social group, the definition is conceptualized as a subjective psychological state

(affective or cognitive) surrounding one's relationship to a particular social group and their associated behaviors and beliefs (Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012). As such, social connectedness is generally referred to as a subjective closeness and togetherness with one's social environment (Lee & Robbins, 1995) and is associated with the level and type of social support that one receives (Ashida & Heaney, 2008). This is to say that social connectedness can be viewed as one's sense of belonging to a community and its subsequent integration into one's sense of their identity (Wei, Wang, Heppner, and Du, 2012). Researchers have long studied the importance of having a perceived sense of belonging or sense of connectedness to a particular group or unit (Jose et al, 2012). According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), self-determination theory (SDT) posits that belongingness is one of three basic psychological needs that are inherent to human functioning. They argue that when the need to belong or feel connected is satisfied, a person's ongoing growth, support, and wellbeing can be positively fostered. As such, research indicates that feelings of belongingness predict outcomes such as improved quality of life (Gillison, Standage, & Skevington, 2008).

Much of the extant literature surrounding social connectedness and cultural identity, examines race and ethnicity, as well as its bearing on acculturation and enculturation. Acculturation can be defined as a non-dominant cultural group's acquisition of the dominant cultural group's norms, values, and customs (Berry, 1997), whereas enculturation is defined as a non-dominant cultural group's retainment of their own cultural heritage (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Wei, Wang, Heppner, & Du, 2012).

Findings suggest that the more enculturated individuals are, the more connected they feel to their ethnic minority communities, and the more acculturated individuals are, the more they feel connected to mainstream society (Yoon, 2006). Social connectedness to both ethnic culture and mainstream culture has been shown to predict greater satisfaction with life, greater social support, lower levels of loneliness, and fewer negative mental health outcomes (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2011; Yoon, Jung, Lee, and Felix-Mora, 2012; Wei et al., 2012). While much of the literature aptly outlines the importance of social connectedness amongst ethnic groups and its impact on subjective wellbeing, it is equally important to examine its relationship with wellbeing amongst other cultural groups such as social class.

With an upsurge in the prominence of social class implications in United States' society and the continued discussion surrounding class mobility, it is essential to examine the relationship between social class connectedness and its effects on subjective wellbeing. It is curious as to whether or not acculturative and enculturative effects on one's social class has a bearing on their wellbeing (Yoon, Lee, & Goh, 2008). In other words, seeing how higher levels of acculturation and enculturation as it relates to mainstream and ethnic connectedness, respectively, has had positive effects on individuals, it is important to examine how connectedness to mainstream social class (i.e. middle class) and one's social class of origin (e.g. lower class) relates to various outcomes of subjective wellbeing. Additionally, seeing how individuals can be both enculturated and acculturated, one or the other, or not at all (Berry, 1980), it is necessary to examine what this might look like with regards to social class, and how it may impact

other variables, such as subjective wellbeing, social connectedness, and belongingness in one's life.

As stated, an individual from a minority cultural group can feel simultaneously connected to the mainstream group and their home cultural group (Wei et al., 2012). While this may be the case, it is not always easily navigated. Likewise, an individual may simultaneously feel little to no connection to either the mainstream group or their home cultural group. This phenomenon has been given term cultural homelessness, which has been used to describe and outline the experiences of multi-ethnic individuals and Third Culture Kids (those who have grown up abroad) (Navarette Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). An individual who is experiencing cultural homelessness can best be described as "living within a framework of experiences, feelings, and thoughts, which do not belong to a single racial, ethnic, or cultural reference group...and are distinguished by their uniqueness" (Navarrete Vivero & Jenkins, 1999, pp. 11-12). These individuals are described as lacking a cultural home, or a set of integrated assumptions, values, beliefs, social role norms, and emotional attachments that constitute a meaningful personal identity that is developed and located within a sociocultural framework and is shared by a group of similar individuals (Navarette Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Navarrete Vivero and Jenkins (1999) highlight the negative impact of cultural homelessness, stating that those who feel as though they do not belong to a cultural home may experience feelings of loneliness, rejection, confusion, isolation, and feelings of not belonging. Although cultural homelessness has only been applied to race and ethnicity, it is important to

broaden this concept and examine the potential effects on other cultural groups, such as social class.

College has traditionally been a forum for middle and upper class individuals to gather and further their education and career opportunities. Since those from the working and lower classes found college to be financially prohibitive, these institutions have been representative of the mainstream social class' worldview (Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000). Today, with a greater number of individuals from the working and lower classes attending institutions of higher education, it may be likely that they can experience feelings of cultural homelessness, in that they are removed from the general worldview of their social class' cultural home and thrust into an environment that emphasizes mainstream social class ideals. Though research has been severely lacking on social class and its manifestation among college students (Schwartz, Donavan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009), there is literature that examines the differences amongst middle class students and students from the working and lower classes. For instance, lower class students often come to college with a limited income and are required to work more, which leads to them studying less, being less involved with campus activities, and reporting a lower GPA than their peers of a higher social class (Walpole, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2009). Additionally, the upsurge of individuals from the working and lower classes in higher educational institutions has had an impact on the familial relations of these students as well. Chickering and Reisser (1993) have highlighted the fact that traditional student development theory encourages independence from family as a component for growth amongst college student. These factors can ultimately lead to feelings of isolation

within the college community as well as a general sense of distancing from their families, thus leading to the general concept of not belonging to a particular cultural home, resulting in a decreased sense of wellbeing (Navarette Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Given these findings, it is necessary to examine how a sense of belongingness and connectedness to one's school environment and family unit may be impacted by an individual's social class connectedness, and subsequently how it impacts one's subjective wellbeing.

Effects of Class Connectedness on Lower Class College Students

People often experience a global sense of belonging, as well as feelings of connectedness toward a particular subgroup, such as a cultural identity or institutional group (Diener, 2013). As such, it is important to examine the relationships between individuals and their connectedness toward certain groups; and to then ascertain the benefits (or lack thereof) that are associated with feelings of belongingness toward particular subgroups and how this impacts an individual's functioning.

It is known that feelings of belongingness contribute to greater wellbeing and an improved quality of life. One domain that has received much attention in the literature is the area of school belongingness. Studies that have examined this phenomenon show that perceptions of school climate, quality of teacher-student relationships, and general feelings of belonging, inclusion, acceptance, and interpersonal support within the institution have been linked to a positive range of outcomes beyond just wellbeing. These outcomes can include student engagement, academic achievement, success expectations, self-efficacy, effort, academic motivation, and task goal orientation (Jose et al., 2012).

Given the fact that individuals spend the majority of their youth and adolescence in a school environment, and now more than ever go on to attend institutions of higher education, it is essential to examine how feelings of school belongingness impacts college students.

Research has shown that having a high school sense of community (SSOC), or a sense of school belongingness, will often lead to positive interactions, like having stronger social and peer network engagement (Williams, Karaholis, & Ferrari, 2012). This allows students to become further committed to school (Garcia, 2010) and may lead to a greater sense of control over one's college life (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), which may ultimately contribute to greater wellbeing. But, individuals coming from and identifying strongly with the working and lower social classes, may find it more difficult to foster a high school sense of community. This may be due in part to general feelings of acculturative stress, or the difficult navigation between mainstream social class culture and one's home social class culture upon arriving at college. Additionally, these students typically have greater demands such as working long hours to afford one's education, leading to a physical absence from the college community itself (Williams et al, 2012). There is much research examining first-generation college students as they frequently come from working and lower class backgrounds. As such, the literature indicates that these students often have a more difficult transition to college life, are less involved in the school community, and feel a lesser sense of belongingness; all which may have deleterious impacts on one's social functioning and wellbeing (Kurotsuchi Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Brown, 2007; Ostrove, 2003; Williams et al., 2012).

Given these findings, it is necessary to further examine the impact that levels of school belongingness may have on individuals who identify with and come from the working and lower classes.

In addition to school belongingness, there is a chance that college students coming from the working and lower classes may experience disruption within their family unit as a result of their college enrollment. Family cohesion, or connectedness, has been shown to predict greater wellbeing, success, and other positive outcomes (StClair-Christman, 2011). So, if there is a decrease in the level of family cohesion, such students may then experience various negative outcomes. When examined directly in the context of college students, family involvement and connectedness has been shown to lead to greater success in academic environments (Henderson & Berla, 1994), and have been shown to hold true regardless of one's social class (Clark, 1983). While social class does not reduce the level of academic success and wellbeing among college students, it is important to examine the ways in which connectedness to the lower class may affect familial cohesion for these individuals. A good proportion of college students who come from the working and lower classes are often times among the first in their families to attend college. Though this may not have a direct bearing on the student's wellbeing, functioning, and success at college, it can impact the way in which the student relates to their various family members, thus potentially disrupting the sense of family cohesion (Bryan and Simmons, 2009).

Aries and Seider (2007) highlight the difficulties among college students from the working and lower classes, who are often navigating the college experience for the first

time. Common sentiments within this population include the fear of betraying their

families as a result of looking like they are changing themselves in order to assimilate to

a higher social class position. Inherent in the nature of attending a college, an advanced

education often brings with it higher income, social power, and prestige (Aries & Seider,

2007). Because of such, this can create the widening of a gap between a college-educated

individual and their working and lower class family members. In addition to the potential

riff amongst family members that is associated with transcending the social class ladder,

Bryan and Simmons (2009) outline other various factors that can lead to the breaking

down of family cohesion. Such factors include the emergence of a separate identity for

these working and lower class college students, limited familial knowledge of what the

student's college experience entails, an overwhelming sense of pressure for the student to

succeed, and the professional and social problems the student faces when returning home.

Given these risk factors, it is necessary to examine how connectedness to the lower class

is related to family cohesion and influences an individual's wellbeing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social class connectedness

on subjective wellbeing (including positive and negative affect and satisfaction with life)

and whether or not school belongingness and family cohesion mediated this relationship.

Since the existing body of literature that examines the positive outcomes associated with

group belongingness and connectedness looks almost exclusively at the acculturation and

enculturation to a particular racial or ethnic group, it is necessary to expand the research

to include other cultural groups, such as social class. Not only was it important to

examine the direct impact of social class connectedness on wellbeing, it was also

important to examine what factors may mediate such a relationship. Given the increasing

number of working and lower class students attending college in today's society, and

often as the first member in their family, it was crucial to see how school belongingness

and family cohesion may affect the relationship between class connectedness and

subjective wellbeing.

First, it was hypothesized that school belongingness would mediate the

relationship between middle class connectedness and subjective wellbeing (see Figure 1).

Specifically, students who had a higher sense of connectedness to the middle class would

have greater levels of school belongingness, which would contribute to higher subjective

wellbeing. Second, it was hypothesized that family cohesion would mediate the

relationship between lower class connectedness and subjective wellbeing (see Figure 2).

Specifically, students who had a higher sense of connectedness to the lower class would

have greater levels of family cohesion, which would contribute to higher subjective

wellbeing.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Mediation Model 1
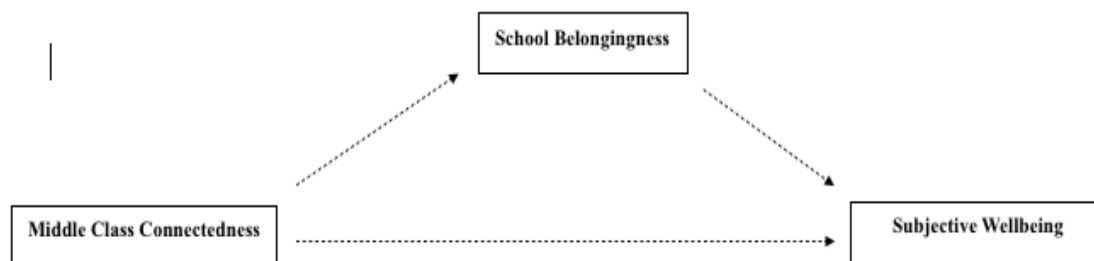
Figure 2. Hypothesized Mediation Model 2
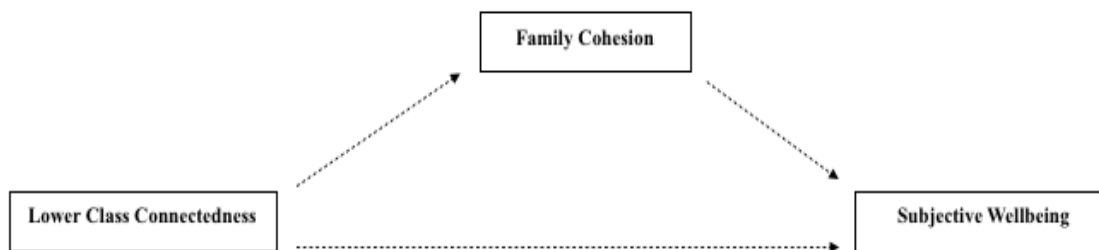
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Psychology of Social Class

In 2003, Division 9 of the American Psychological Association (APA)--the

Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), submitted a business plan

for APA to establish a committee to serve as a general coordinator for the examination of

issues regarding socioeconomic status (SES) and subsequently teach how to integrate

such findings into the work of psychological scholars (TFSS; 2007). Due to the

importance and impact of socioeconomic factors on various psychological aspects of

one's identity and experiences (Fouad & Brown, 2000) a committee was established in

2005 to spearhead this endeavor within the field of psychology, and became known as the

APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status.

Liu et al. (2004) asserted, social status variables constitute a meaningful cultural

dimension in people's lives, yet are rarely examined in the psychological literature. And,

when it is, it is infrequently integrated into the impact it has on one's identity, culture,

and general sense of wellbeing. The TFSS recognized these implications and chose to

examine the importance of SES as it relates to the disparities between social classes with

regard to access of resources (e.g. health care, education, nutrition, sociopolitical

influence, and environmental hazards) and the impact that it has on human welfare.

Additionally, they set out to provide strategies and recommendations to help reduce

disparities and remedy hazardous outcomes (TFSS; 2007). The main objectives of this

committee were to: "(a) operationally [define] the scope, nature, range, parameters, and

effects of socioeconomic inequalities in the United States; (b) operationally [define]

psychological issues associated with SES; and (c) [recommend] mechanisms and

structures that would more effectively address, on an association wide basis, the causes

and the impact of socioeconomic inequality" (TFSS; 2007, Preface). It was just about one

decade ago that APA recognized a dire need for the field to address the important

implications that socioeconomic factors can have on one's psychological existence.

The TFSS was likely created to help keep in accordance with the growing socio-

economic demographics of the United States, as well as the constantly shifting socio-

political implications associated with these adjustments. According to the United States

Census Bureau (2012), the median household income decreased 8.3% from 2007 (the

time in which the TFSS first published its findings) to 2012. Recently, the United States

has been experiencing the greatest gap in the distribution of wealth that it has ever been

seen (Domhoff, 2013). The widening gap is compounded with a continual upsurge in

poverty, in which there are currently 46.5 million individuals (15% of the United States'

documented population) living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This alone

denotes a stark need for the field of psychology to embrace the scholarly and applied

inclusion and integration of the effects socioeconomic variables have on an individual.

Yet, while it is extraordinarily important to examine the implications that

socioeconomic disparities have on an individual's wellbeing and functioning, it is even

more important to look at the subjectivity of these variables and its impact and influence

on one's social status position, or social class, as theory posits that one's observation and evaluation of their social class position has more bearing on one's psychological functioning than income, education, and/or occupation does (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

Throughout the psychological, sociological, and economic literature, there is no one agreed upon definition of what constitutes social class. Socioeconomic status and social class are often used interchangeably in psychological research and theory due to the fact that the concept of "social class" is often an elusive one, in which scholars have yet to decide upon an official definition (Liu et al., 2004). While SES and social class are undeniably related, it is important to define and understand the nuanced differences between both constructs. SES is typically defined as a stratification system that uses the objective marker of income to classify individuals into social class groups (Olson, 2011). While some researchers may include an individual's and parents' level of education and their occupations as criteria for SES (Kohn, 1979), there is no agreed upon set of variables used to measure this construct, nor does there appear to be a clear rationale for their usage (Argyle, 1994).

Instead, in current research and classification systems, income level is the most commonly used indicator (Liu et al., 2004). SES differs from social class because individuals are placed into categories based almost exclusively on their economic means, whereas, people are placed into social class categories as a result of various other markers (Liu et al., 2004; Smith, 2008; Sosnaud, Brady, & Frenk, 2013). Though the most prominent and widely used conceptualization of social class utilizes objective indicators to classify individuals into a class status (Liu et al., 2004), the importance behind social

class groupings is not how one identifies objectively, but rather how one identifies subjectively.

Since the beginning writings of social class, objective markers of one's class position have traditionally been defined as: occupation, skills, authority, economic interests, and market situation (Giddens, 1973). Currently, scholars have streamlined these indicators to include not only income level, but also educational attainment, occupational prestige, and geographical region of residence (Smith, 2008). In breaking these objective markers down even further, economic cultural groups, or what we would consider to be a broader conceptualization of social classes, may also be defined by ones' relationships to property (materialism), their behaviors (dress, language, mannerisms, and etiquette), their referent groups (family and peers), and other lifestyle considerations (e.g. leisure activities and vacation time) (Smith, 2008; Liu et al. 2004).

In one of the earliest writings on the subjectivity of social class, Weber (1922) discusses that a group of people who share specific components of their life experiences, as it directly relates to economic interests (e.g. property, income, and market situation), belong to a particular class grouping. He maintained that this identification does not necessarily need to require class consciousness or class-based action, and that in a country like the United States, where class consciousness is low (Verba & Schlozman, 1977), individuals need not identify with social classes that correspond directly to their objective life chances. Instead, the subjectivity of class can shape one's life chances as a result of influencing their experiences, opportunities, and constraints (Weber, 1922). Thus, they are able to categorize themselves on the basis of how they compare

themselves to others located within their immediate surroundings (Evan & Kelley, 2004).

For example, those in the upper social classes often associate with others who inhabit

elite networks, interacting almost exclusively with the top of the social hierarchy (Wright,

1997).

Additionally, those who inhabit the lower social classes will usually be able to

find others in their proximate surroundings who they view to be living as worse off

(Evans, Kelley, & Kolosi, 1992). Thus, individuals have a tendency to compare

themselves to others in their close surroundings and often view oneself as occupying a

mid-level position within their local social structure regardless of their SES-designated

category (Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk, 2013). Recognizing the subjectivity of social class

and the difference between SES and social class as a construct, is essential for social

scientists to comprehend. This is especially true for those who go on to examine the

impact of social class identification on individuals' functioning. As a result, it is

imperative to differentiate objective markers of social class from subjective markers,

highlight the importance of subjective class identification, and understand the overall

impact that this identification and conceptualization may have on an individual.

Worldview has been conceptualized as "patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and

perceptions that is shared by a population based on similar socialization and life

experiences" (Watts, 1994, p. 52). Frequently, an individual's worldview is often based

on their perceived social class, which is the same as their subjective social class

identification. In 2001, Liu presented the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM), in

which he defines Social Class Worldview (SCW) as "the belief 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 function's

in one's life" (Liu et al., 2004, p.9). In this case, worldview has been broken down into

five domains which include: (1) referent groups (a dimension of socialization messages);

(2) property relationships, (3) lifestyles, (4) behaviors (all dimensions of external

representation); and (5) consciousness, attitudes and salience (serving as a measure of

meaningfulness for each of the other domains). This model has been established as a way

to help psychologists understand that "SCWM is a schema individuals use to make sense

of their economic and social class environment" (Liu, 2002, p. 356; Liu & Pope-Davis,

2003). Liu's SCWM makes three assumptions, which state that: "(a) the people's

perceptions shape their reality, (b) that social class can operate at an individual level, and

(c) that people oscillate between feelings of satisfaction and failure when it comes to

social class needs and word toward homeostasis (i.e., a state) in their social class

worldview (Liu, 2002, p. 356; Liu, 2001).

Although all five domains are essential in developing one's worldview, and thus

are reflective of their subjective social class identity; for the purposes of this study, it is

important to focus on the dimension of socialization messages, which includes the

domain of referent groups. This domain encompasses past, present, and aspirational

individuals whom an individual attends to and who they want to be most similar to (Liu,

2002). Past groups typically refer to one's family of origin and those who provided the

individual with socialization messages early on. The present group is inclusive of an

individual's peers/cohorts, whom are usually most similar to the individual in terms of

social class. The aspirational group is representative of those identifying with the social

that they individual would like to identify with in the future (Liu et al., 2004). Given the

assumptions of SCWM, the way in which an individual perceives their surroundings and

those around them is very important to the formation, interpretation, and internalization

of one's social class identity.

Although researchers in the late twentieth century began to recognize the

importance of examining sociocultural variables, such as social class (Argyle, 1994;

Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Blustein, Chaves, Diemer, Gallagher,

Marshall et al., 2002), it was not until the early twenty-first century that scholars began to

emphasize the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the psychological meaning

of social class and the impact that it has on a person (Thompson, 2008). In 2000, Fouad

and Brown proposed their theory on Differential Status Identity (DSI). In their chapter on

DSI, they outline this construct to be a cultural variable that influences the way personal

and social identities are constructed. As such, like race and other cultural reference

groups, social class is also a cultural construct that influences how both individuals and

others perceive them(selves) and is influenced by the social context in which they are

operating in (Thompson, 2008). Therefore, social class has been hypothesized to

influence various developmental outcomes, impacting the way in which an individual

perceives their social status as compared to those around them (Fouad & Brown, 2000).

Like Weber argued in 1922, an individual will experience their social class in comparison

to their contemporaries and thus, make inferences about their social position and its

meaning within a sociopolitical context. This comparison leads to a perceived social

identity status that is based on one's social class position, and is particularly true for those who are existing within a non-ordinant social class group, potentially leading to detrimental outcomes.

In explaining the function of DSI, Fouad and Brown (2000) stated that the more salient one's cultural reference group is, the greater the impact it will likely have on an individual. In using the example of race, one's racial group membership will be more salient to an African American than to a European American. This is based on the social positioning of racial groups as according to social, political, and historical factors in the United States (Argyle, 1994; Thompson, 2008). Since the African American racial group is in a nonordinant position in U.S. society, race will be more salient to an individual identifying as such. As a result, this group membership and identification makes it more likely for the individual to internalize their "inferior" position. Fouad and Brown (2000) highlight how this is also true for those occupying nonordinant social class positions. Because of the social stratification that exists in U.S. society, they argue that social class is a more salient component of one's identity (Rossides, 1997). Based on the sociopolitical context of the United States, this is especially true for those who claim membership in the upper and lower social class groups. The level of salience that social class has for and individual is particularly pronounced when their identity is different than the majority of the others around them (Thompson, 2008). Given this proposition, one's social class position will be more prominent for an individual in higher education who identifies as lower class, as the majority of those surrounding them are likely to identify with the middle or upper classes.

Differential Status Identity theory bases itself upon Rossides' (1997) Social

Stratification Theory. Fouad and Brown, and Rossides posit that social status is based on

three interrelated, albeit independent, domains. They include: economic resources

(income, education level, personal assets, economic security, etc.), social power (one's

perceived control of social values, power to influence political/legal power, etc.), and

social prestige (perceived prestigiousness of one's occupation, level of consumerism,

participation in certain subcultures, etc.). These domains are considered to be a subjective

consideration of social class, due the complexity of the multidimensional

conceptualization of social status (Thompson, 2008; Rossides, 1990; Rossides, 1997;

Fouad & Brown, 2000). Given this information, objective markers do not necessarily

dictate how an individual relates to each of the aforementioned domains. For instance, an

individual may be placed into a relatively high income bracket (e.g. a sanitation worker),

but could endorse lower levels of social prestige. Conversely, an individual may be a

neurosurgeon, endorsing high social prestige, but identify as an African American

women, indicating lower levels of social power and occupying a nonordinant position

based on race and gender. As such, it is important to look at one's social class identity as

quite complex and being a point on a continuum that is affected by multiple factors, as

opposed to being a categorical designator. That being said, it is important to recognize the

various outcomes that may be resultant of one's position on the continuum of social class

identity.

According to DSI theory, individuals who occupy nonordinant positions are more

likely to experience greater negative psychological consequences than those who occupy

ordinant social class positions (Fouad & Brown, 2000). These consequences can range

from objective to subjective. For instance, individuals who identify as lower class tend to

have higher levels of emotional and behavioral difficulties, aggression, and hostility. This

can lead to higher incidences of anxiety, depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity

disorder, and conduct disorder (Weissman, Gerhson, Kid et al., 1994; Goodman, 1999;

Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002; Molnar, Cerda, Roberts, & Buka, 2008). In addition to

occurrences of mental illness, individuals in the lower class are more likely to endorse

lower levels of self-esteem as a result of occupying a social status position that is

considered to be subordinate and lower on the social class hierarchy (Starrin, 2002). As a

result, individuals in this position may experience shame based on their social class

identification and therefore, perceive themselves as inferior. This shame can then emerge

and be internalized as a sense of negative self-evaluation (Lundberg, Kristenson, &

Starrin, 2009). Importantly, such consequences can have a grave impact on an

individual's wellbeing, in which literature suggests that is can lead to several other

negative consequences, like poorer physical and mental health, and decreased academic

and career success. (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Diener & Chan, 2011).

Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing is a construct that is widely studied within the field of

counseling psychology. This has become an area of great importance with the emergence

of positive psychology and happiness as a major topic of interest (Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2013).

Subjective wellbeing refers to an individual's overall evaluation of the quality of their life

(Diener, 2000) and is frequently identified as having two conceptual components—an

affective component and a cognitive component. The affective piece has been defined as

hedonic, relating this aspect to the pleasant, positive moods, experiences, and feelings in

a person's life, as well as the lack, or absence, of unpleasant, negative moods,

experiences, and feelings. Examples can include an individual who might endorse

experiencing feelings of excitement or joy more days than not, while infrequently

reporting feelings of anxiety or fear. The cognitive component of subjective wellbeing

has been conceptualized as overall contentment and satisfaction, in which an individual

ascribes a global appraisal to their life (Veenhoven, 1991; Strack, et al., 2001; Jose, Ryan,

& Pryor, 2012; Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2013). Diener (1984), a luminary in the study of

subjective wellbeing, defined these three components—life satisfaction, positive

experiences (or affect), and negative experiences (or affect) as encompassing the

measurable construct of subjective wellbeing.

Much research has been devoted to the study of subjective wellbeing with steady

expansion to the literature occurring over the past thirty to forty years (Diener, 2013).

Diener (2013) points out that when he began his research in the early 1980s, the majority

of studies examined subjective wellbeing within the context of how it relates to

demographic correlates, such as age, sex, and education. While that is surely important,

the research has since expanded to include how factors, such as personality, culture, and

psychological processes influence subjective wellbeing. Not only has the research

progressed with regard to how various factors and processes relate to and interact with

subjective wellbeing, but also with the way in which it measures these relationships and

interactions. Longitudinal studies that utilize self-report scales, experience sampling,

biological measures, and informant reports are now being used, which helps the literature to include more than just cross-sectional, correlational studies. This is an important advancement due to the fact that so many different contextual factors can have a bearing on one's satisfaction with life and their experiences of positive and negative affect. While many advancements have been made in this area of study, it is suffice to say that there is still a need for this construct to be examined in relation to many other psychological processes. The reason being is that subjective wellbeing has been shown to be such an important factor in an individual's life as it has several positive outcomes and implications.

Higher levels of subjective wellbeing are accounted for by greater satisfaction with life, increased positive affect, and decreased negative affect. It has been shown that higher subjective wellbeing reflects optimal levels of functioning that are traditionally valued by individuals and U.S. society as a whole, including: higher levels of productivity, greater success, stronger social relationships, and increased health and longevity (Diener, 2000; Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Parron, 2001; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Lyubomisky, King, & Diener, 2005; Harter, Schmidt, Asplund, Killham, & Agrawal, 2010; Edmand, 2012). These outcomes are positive on varying accounts as they increase wellness from the micro to the macro levels of society. As counseling psychology has built its foundation on the study of individual strengths and has taken an overall wellness-based and developmental approach (Lent, 2004), it is important for the field to examine factors that positively affect and impact an individual's subjective wellbeing.

As mentioned, early research in this area examined how external factors, such as income, age, gender, education, and marital status are predictive of subjective wellbeing. Through this research, scholars were able to discern that these factors had an impact on subjective wellbeing, but only to a modest extent. Researchers then began examining internal variables (e.g. personality, cognitions, goals, culture, coping abilities, gratitude, self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, etc.) and soon realized that these variables have greater impact and more bearing on subjective wellbeing than external factors do (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Diener; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). Meta-analyses have concluded that this is accurate across the board, as personality and other internal factors have a greater bearing on subjective wellbeing than demographic variables (DeNeve & Cooper, 2008). Diener (2013) asserts that taking a top-down approach toward examining how various factors affect subjective wellbeing is more meaningful and important than the traditional bottom-up approach, in which the effects of external factors are assessed. He concludes that there are many mediating and moderating psychological factors that exert influence on one's satisfaction with life and their overall affect. Thus, it has been necessary within the area of subjective wellbeing to analyze the way in which various psychological processes and concepts affect this construct.

With the emphasis on how psychological processes impact subjective wellbeing, there is much research that looks at how variables, such as cultural identities, may predict, mediate, or moderate subjective wellbeing. Cultural factors and differences have been shown to impact subjective wellbeing based on the environment in which they are living in (Diener, 2013). For instance, Diener points out that individuals living in

individualistic societies tend to pay more attention to their emotions when evaluating their life satisfaction due to the fact that individual emotions are considered to be a core component of individualistic cultural identity. He maintains that this behavior often differs in collectivistic cultures, as those individuals tend to pay more attention to their social relationships and whether others view their lives as successful when determining life satisfaction. As such, Diener (2013) concludes that people who possess characteristics that are in accordance with their societal norms and values often tend to have higher subjective wellbeing. Thus, it is important to examine how various cultural aspects of one's life impact their subjective wellbeing.

As previously stated, individuals who occupy nonordinant positions are more likely to experience greater negative psychological consequences than those who occupy ordinant social class positions (Fouad & Brown, 2000). Scholars have indicated that the relation between wellbeing and income is substantially positive. They surmise that this may likely be due to the fact that greater wealth and access to greater wealth can allow for better infrastructure in telecommunications, transportation, sanitation, health care, education, civil services, and social safety nets, in which an individual's basic needs are able to be met and allows for their life circumstances to tangibly improve (Tay & Kuykendall, 2013). Though, these effects are based on objective indicators only, such as economic wealth and socio-economic status. While this is consistently shown to be the case when comparing objective indicators to one's level of physical and psychological functioning, research has shown that changes in one's income does not necessarily produce corresponding changes in subjective wellbeing (Easterlin & Swangfa, 2010).

Therefore, it is important to further understand the implications that subjective factors, such as social class identification, have on an individual's subjective wellbeing as subjective identification factors is where the majority of the recent research has been directed.

Tay and Kuykendall (2013) highlight the fact that in their observations, objective markers, such as economic wealth, are not directly related to subjective wellbeing. They posit that this is true because wealth creates higher aspirations, which in turn means that more wealth is consistently needed in order to increase their subjective wellbeing. Additionally, they concluded that wealthier individuals may not experience increased subjective wellbeing on behalf of wealth alone due to comparison amongst themselves and lateral and higher social class groups. They argue that this may lead to a revolving cycle, in which individuals are constantly trying to keep up with their peers, which may lead to a decrease in life satisfaction and positive affect, and an increase in negative affect. As such, objective markers, such as wealth, should not be the sole class-based source used when assessing the subjective wellbeing of an individual. Instead, subjective indicators, such as one's orientation toward a particular social class group may be more indicative of subjective wellbeing as this may better account for the person's societal norms and values of their identified social class group.

As indicated, objective markers of social class (i.e. income, education, occupation) are not regarded as strong predictors of an individual's subjective wellbeing. While being a member of a particular socio-economic status may increase one's access to resources and benefits that might aid in an individual's enhanced physical and

psychological functioning, it does not determine whether one is subjectively satisfied with their lives or if they experience an increase in positive emotions. As such, it is important to examine instead how closely connected an individual is with a particular social class group. The reason for this is that numerous scholars have concluded that feelings of social connectedness to a particular group can reduce negative effects of stressful life events and can positively contribute to overall wellbeing and serve as a protective factor (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Oishi, 2000; Lee, Dean, & Jung, 2008; Safdar, Lay, & Struthers, 2003; Yah & Inose, 2003). With the increased emphasis on how internal factors relate to a person's subjective wellbeing, there have been many findings that support the notion that one's level of social connectedness to a particular cultural group is instrumental in determining their overarching level of subjective wellbeing (Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2013; Diener, 2013).

Social Connectedness

Social connectedness has been defined as a global construct of belongingness in the social world, in which a person feels a sense of belonging and connectedness to a certain group, be it related to family, school, peers, community, and/or culture (Lee & Robbins, 1995; Yoon & Lee, 2010; Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012). When examining social connectedness as it relates to a particular cultural group and its influence on their subjective wellbeing, much of the research has looked at one's connectedness to various racial/ethnic groups, particularly amongst immigrant and ethnic-minority populations (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Diener, 2013). While this provides a strong foundational basis to draw potential implications from, it is necessary to empirically examine the relationship

between social connectedness to social class groups and subjective wellbeing. This is particularly true due to the growing literature that exists surrounding social class identity, as well as the shifting state of United States' social class identification and its emphasis on the implications of social class identity, as has been previously mentioned.

Those who feel socially connected to a particular social group often report feeling a strong sense of social support from other members who belong to that group (Palomar-Lever, 2007). Scholars have gone on to show that when an individual receives adequate support in their life, they are more likely to experience increased self-confidence and self-esteem, serve as a support for others, exhibit fewer illnesses and have a stronger immunological system with a propensity for longer life, have greater frustration tolerance, and increased capacity for resolving problems (Palomar-Lever, 2007; Sarason & Sarason, 1996; Uchino, Caioppo & Kiecholy-Glaser, 1996). While increased support is related to greater physical and psychological functioning, social support, which is often inherent to social connectedness, has also been shown to be indicative of greater subjective wellbeing. Individuals who feel supported by and socially connected to a particular social group have reported an increase in psychological strengths, gratitude, positive feelings, and satisfaction with life (Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2013). Therefore, it may be appropriate to conclude that an individual who feels connected to a particular social class group may be more apt to exhibit greater subjective wellbeing. Though, without empirical data to back this assumption up, it is necessary to examine whether or not this is in fact true, as it will allow for greater knowledge and understanding of implications associated with subjective wellbeing as it relates to social class connectedness.

Social connectedness research has highlighted how a person experiences a sense of belonging and support from a particular cultural or social group that they feel they belong to or connect with (Lee & Robbins, 1995). With this, it is important to highlight that an individual does not need to feel socially connected to only their objectively-identified social class group. Instead, a person can simultaneously feel connected to the dominant social class group, as well as their social class of origin (if not already the dominant social class group). This is in-line with acculturation and enculturation research. Acculturation can be explained when a member of a group with less societal and political power (e.g. lower social class group) is to acclimate to a group with greater power, typically the dominant social group (e.g. middle social class) and adopt their customs, values, and cultural identities. Whereas enculturation is when a member of a group with less societal and political power is to acclimate to their home cultural group's (e.g. lower social class group) customs and ways of being (Berry, 1997). As such, it is important to examine the level of social connectedness a person has with their social class of origin, as well as the dominant social class, when determining its impact on subjective wellbeing and the associated implications.

Acculturation and Enculturation

Acculturation was defined early-on by Redfield, Linton, and Herkovits (1936). They defined acculturation as a phenomenon, in which individuals from different cultures come into contact with one another and experience changes in original cultural patterns by either one or all of the cultures accounted for. This concept indicated that acculturation is bidirectional, meaning that multiple cultures can exchange ideas and

customs with one another, allowing for various cultures to borrow from each other. While this is an apropos concept, it did not account for the role that socio-political power plays in this exchange of customs. Berry (1997), one of the foremost scholars in acculturation research, highlights that groups with less power (non-dominant cultural groups) are more likely to acculturate to groups with greater power (dominant cultural groups). That being said, the modern definition of acculturation is commonly defined as a non-dominant group's acquisition of the dominant group's cultural norms, values, and customs (Berry, 1997). While acculturation accounts for a non-dominant cultural group's acquisition of the dominant cultural group's culture, enculturation is defined as a non-dominant group's retainment of their own cultural heritage (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Wei, Wang, Heppner, & Du, 2012). Frequently, enculturation literature supports the notion that an individual who is enculturated to their cultural group of origin is more likely to feel connected their cultural community (Yoon, 2006).

The foremost scholar of the acculturation/enculturation literature, John Berry, has identified four acculturation strategies, or groups, that are in response to the maintenance of one's culture of origin and to the acquisition of the dominant culture (Berry 1998). These bilinear groupings of acculturation/enculturation are most widely used in recent literature when examining these constructs. These strategies put cultural-minority individuals into various groupings regarding how they engage their home cultural identity and that of the dominant cultural identity. The four groups include: a) integration (feeling connected to their home culture and to their dominant culture); b) assimilation (feeling connected to the dominant culture but not to their home culture); c) separation (feeling

connect to their home culture but not to the dominant culture); and d) marginalization

(not feeling connected to neither their home culture nor the dominant culture) (Berry,

1998). These strategies have been shown over time to be closely related to psychological

outcomes, adaptation, and mental health. Individuals who are in the integration group

tend to have the greatest positive outcomes, those in the marginalization group have the

least positive outcomes, and those in the assimilation and marginalization to have

intermediate outcomes (Berry 1998, Yoon, 2013).

Research across the board has highlighted the positive impact that being

acculturated and enculturated have on an individual. Yoon et al. (2013) found through

their meta-analytic study that (racial/ethnic) acculturation is positively related to positive

mental health outcomes (e.g. self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and positive affect) and

negatively related to negative mental health outcomes (e.g. depression, anxiety,

psychological distress, and negative affect). Additionally, they found that (racial/ethnic)

enculturation is positively related to positive mental health outcomes. Therefore, it is

important to examine how individuals who identify with a cultural minority group can

feel connected to both their home cultural group and the dominant cultural group,

allowing them to fall within the integrated designation.

As previously mentioned, Social connectedness to both ethnic culture and

mainstream culture has been shown to predict greater satisfaction with life, greater social

support, lower levels of loneliness, and fewer negative mental health outcomes (Yoon &

Lee, 2010; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2012; Yoon, Jung, Lee, and

Felix-Mora, 2011; Wei et al., 2012)While the acculturation/enculturation literature does a

good job at examining the importance of social connectedness to both dominant and non-dominant racial/ethnic/immigrant groups, it does not extend much beyond race or ethnicity. As such, it is important for scholars to expand this research to include other cultural identities, like that of social class. Since social class has been shown to have a great bearing on one's identity (e.g. Differential Status Identity) and their wellbeing, it is necessary to extend the research to include how acculturated, or connected, a lower-class-identified individual is toward the middle class, as well as their social class of origin (e.g. lower-class). Since lower-class college students are more likely to experience cultural homelessness (marginalization), it is important to examine how one's level of social connectedness toward an institution of higher education will impact their subjective wellbeing.

According to Berry's research, it is most beneficial for a cultural-minority individual to feel connected to both the dominant culture and to their home culture in order to produce the most beneficial psychological outcomes (Berry 1998). Since little research exists within this area as it relates to social class, it is important to deduce the ways in which an individual coming from a lower social class background may feel most connected to the dominant social class, as well as their home social class. This is particularly true for college students coming from a lower social class background as they are currently enrolling in 4-year colleges and universities at exponential rates (Williams, Karahalios, & Ferrari, 2013). As mentioned, many college students coming from a lower social class background are attending institutions of higher education, which frequently exist within middle class hegemony. As such, examining connectedness toward the

middle class for these students may provide insight into whether or not they feel even more connected to the their school community. Conversely, examining connection toward their social class of origin may also be an important construct to assess when examining family cohesion.

Belongingness

Akin to social connectedness, the construct of belongingness was originally proposed by Maslow in 1954 according to his theorized hierarchy of needs. Maslow maintained that an individual experiences an inherent desire to belong, which is fueled by a person's inclination for having affectionate relationships with others, while also holding a place within a particular group. According to this theory, a person must feel a particular sense of belongingness in order to progress up the hierarchical levels of needs, culminating in self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Baumeister & Leary (1995) expounded on Maslow's research and theory by concluding that belongingness is a psychological necessity that leads to positive outcomes. They speak about the belongingness hypothesis, in which belongingness includes consistent interaction and persistent caring as perceived by an individual, in addition to frequent contact. Therefore, it is important to highlight that a sense of belongingness is subjective in nature, in that an individual may be perpetually surrounded by others and receive social support, but not feel as though others care for their needs or provide them with a sense of acceptance. Since the construct of belongingness assesses the extent to which an individual feels cared for by a group or community of individuals, a sense of belongingness can occur across several different areas (e.g. peers, cultural groups, work place setting, etc). For the purposes of this study,

the literature will mostly focus on that of school (school belongingness) and family

(family cohesion), in order to examine their potential mediating effects on the relations of

social class acculturative and enculturative factors and subjective wellbeing.

School Belongingness

School belongingness can be defined as a sense of social connection toward a

school community, academic institution, and/or campus that fosters positive or negative

outcomes depending on the depth of connection, or lack thereof (Osterman, 2000;

Pittman & Richardson, 1998; Bottom, Ferrari, Matteo, & Todd, 2013). Theorists have

indicated that school belongingness goes beyond just school affiliation and teacher

support, in that an individual experiences a sense of commitment to the institution, as

well as having a sense that their abilities are recognized by others (Pittman & Richmond,

1998). Bottom, et al. (2013) suggest that in order for a person to experience an overall

sense of belonging to their school community, each individual undergoes a process, in

which they experience a developing sense of membership, influence from other

community-members, integration and fulfillment of their psychological needs, and a

shared emotional connection. In this regard, a sense of school belongingness is

bidirectional, in that students need to feel as though they both belong and are accepted, as

well as accept those and the community around them. It has been argued that this sense of

school belongingness comes from perceived peer and faculty support, classroom comfort,

limited feelings of isolation, and empathic faculty understanding; and in order to facilitate

student adaption to the school environment, these relationships need to be functional and

reciprocal (Hoffman, et al., 2003).

As such, school belongingness is a very important factor in the overall health and wellbeing of students. Individuals that report greater levels of school belongingness have been shown to exhibit more positive outcomes with regard to their academic performance, social adjustment, levels of self-perception, physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing, in addition to decreased internalizing behaviors (Pittman & Richmond, 1998; Hoffman et al., 2003; Bottom, Ferrari, Matteo, & Todd, 2013). For these reasons, it is important to assess the ways in which school belongingness impacts college students' wellbeing, who are coming from a working or lower social class backgrounds, due to the fact that they are already at increased risk to face barriers that may negatively impact their overall levels of subjective wellbeing.

In examining school belongingness as a mediating factor in the relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and subjective wellbeing, we are assessing whether or not school belongingness mediates the impact that a social class acculturative factor has on subjective wellbeing. Conversely, it is important to assess whether a sense of enculturative belongingness (i.e., family cohesion) mediates the relationship between one's connection to their social class of origin and subjective wellbeing.

Family Cohesion

Family cohesion can be defined as a measure of social connection to one's familial unit, which helps foster either positive or negative outcomes depending on the level of connection. It is often used as a global indicator of family functioning, typically indicating the overall health of familial relationships and signifies one's sense of

belonging to their familial unit (Tiesel, 1994*; Dillion, De La Rosa, & Ibañez, 2013). It is

important to note that the familial unit can, and often does include one's immediate

family (i.e. parents and siblings); though it is subjective in nature and includes whomever

the person perceives to belong within their family unit (e.g. grandparents, aunts, uncles,

cousins, family friends) (Clakins, 2005). Existing research has shown that when family

cohesion is high for an individual, they are more likely to exhibit positive outcomes, such

as increased confidence, successful academic performance, enhanced educational and

social identities, greater self-efficacy in career decision-making, (London, 1989; Kotrlik

& Harrison, 1989; Penick & Jepsen, 1992; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996).

There is already a wealth of research that looks at the relevance of family

cohesion as it relates to first generation college students. Much of this literature

highlights the importance of family involvement in these students' educational processes,

and it has been found that these students are more successful and achieve more when

their families are involved in their learning (Clark, 1983; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

While much of the extant literature highlights the positive outcomes associated with

family cohesion (and particularly as it relates to first-generation college students), there is

a dearth of studies that examine the relationship between family cohesion and subjective

wellbeing, as well as family cohesion as it relates to social class. It is unclear as to

whether or not family cohesion definitive predicts higher subjective wellbeing, and if so,

whether or not it explains the relationship between social class connectedness and

subjective wellbeing. Therefore, further research in this area is indicated.

Based on the review of the existing literature, it is necessary to examine the effects of social class connectedness on subjective wellbeing (including positive and negative affect and satisfaction with life) and whether or not school belongingness and family cohesion mediate this relationship. Since the existing body of literature that examines the positive outcomes associated with group belongingness and connectedness does not evaluate the impact and potential importance of social class as it relates to subjective wellbeing, it is essential to look at these effects. Given the increasing number of working and lower class students attending college in today's society, and often as the first member in their family, it is crucial to see how school belongingness and family cohesion may explain the relationship between class connectedness and subjective wellbeing.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected from 507 individuals that were specifically targeted to meet a

delineated set of criteria for the purposes of this study. Inclusion criteria indicated that

individuals be between the ages of 18 and 25, be enrolled in a 4-year college or

university, and identify as originally coming from a working of lower class background.

This was done via a web-based survey that was posted on social media websites (e.g.

Craigslist, Facebook), disseminated via special interest groups and student support

programs (e.g. Community Service Fraternities, TRiO Student Support Services), and

through word-of-mouth (friends-of-friends). Once individuals were recruited, they were

given a link to an online-survey, which described the study's purpose and intent and were

asked to give informed consent. The questionnaires asked participants about their

demographics, connectedness to the dominant social class (middle class), connectedness

to their social class of origin (lower/working class), school belongingness, family

cohesion, and subjective wellbeing (satisfaction with life, positive affect, and negative

affect). Upon completion, participants were eligible to enter a raffle to win 1 of 12 $25

gift cards. A total of 288 participants were included in the analyzed sample. There were

219 cases that were not included due to ineligibility (e.g. not enrolled in a 4-year college,

identifying as middle-class, above the age of 25) or for answering less than 80% of any

measure. Participants' self-identified social classes for family of origin included: poverty/poor (6.3%), low-income (25.3%), working poor (12.5%), working class (24.7%), lower-middle class (22.2%), and other (low-income/working class) (0.3%). Because subjective indicators of social class tend to be more informative to an individual's identity than objective markers (e.g. income) (Fouad & Brown, 2000), participants were included dependent upon how they chose to define their social class background. Participants were asked to base their social class background according to how they identified their family of origin's primary social class.

The mean age of participants was 20.66 (SD = 1.77) with the majority identifying as women (73.3%). Racial/ethnic identity of participants included: White (34.4%), Hispanic/Latino/a (27.1%), Asian/Pacific-Islander (19.1%), Black/African-American (10/4%), Multiracial (6/3%), and Other (e.g. Middle Eastern) (2.1%). Most participants identified as first-generation college students, with 78.8% of participants whose mothers, and 75.6% of participants whose fathers did not complete a degree from a 4-year institution. Also, 28.5% of participants indicated that they belonged to a TRiO Student Support Services program. For a full demographic breakdown of participants, please see Table 1.

Instruments

Demographic Information

Participants were asked to complete a single page of demographic information including: age, gender, race, social class of origin, academic year, highest level of

education completed by participant's mother, highest level of education completed by participant's father, and involvement in a TRiO Student Support Services program.

Social Class Connectedness

Scales were adapted from Yoon's (2006) Social Connectedness in the Mainstream Society and the Ethnic Community Scales (SCMN and SCETH). Scale items were reworded to measure a new construct of connectedness to the middle class (Social Connectedness to Middle Class-SCMC) as well as connectedness to the working or lower social class (Social Connectedness to Working and Lower Class -SCLC). The original scales are parallel and contain 5-items each that measure a subjective sense of closeness and belonging to mainstream society and the ethnic community (Yoon, 2006). Each scale is rated on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1=*strongly disagree*, and 7=s*trongly agree*. Total scores range from 5-35, with higher scores reflecting a greater sense of connectedness. Sample items for SCMN include: "I feel a sense of closeness with U.S. Americans". In this study, "U.S. Americans" and the like, were adapted to measure the construct of social class, thus for the SCMC scale in this study, the item read as "I feel a sense of closeness with Middle Class Americans". A sample item of SCLC includes "I feel a sense of closeness with _____ Americans", where "_____" was filled with "Lower or Working Class". Scale validation studies for the original SCMN and SCETH support construct, convergent, discriminant, and concurrent validity, with a Cronbach's alpha of .94 for SCMN and .95 for SCETH (Yoon et al., 2012). Internal consistency for SCMC in this study's sample is .925 and .898 for SCLC.

School Belongingness

The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale was developed by Goodenow (1993) to measure the construct in which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in a school environment. It consists of 18 items that are rated on a 5-point scale, with 1= *not at all true*, and 5= *completely true*. Total scores range from 18-90, with higher scores reflecting a greater sense of school belongingness. Sample items include, "I am treated with as much respect as other students" and "I feel a real part of [name of school]". Scale validation studies support concurrent validity with other mental health constructs, and construct validity. Cronbach's alphas have ranged from .78 to .95 across 27 studies (You, Ritchey, Furlong, Shochet, and Borman, 2010). Internal consistency for PSSM in this study's sample is .864.

Family Cohesion

The Family Assessment Device (FAD) was developed by Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop (1983), which operationalizes The McMaster Model of Family Functioning, indicating whether a family has certain structural and organizational properties and patterns that declare them as healthy or unhealthy (Tiesel, 1994). The FAD is a 60-item measure consisting of seven subscales. For the purpose of this study, the FAD-General Functioning Subscale was only used. The General Functioning subscale is a composite of the other six subscales, including: affective involvement, behavioral control, roles, problem solving, communication, and affective responsiveness. This subscale has been widely researched and validated, and contains 12 items that are rated on a 5-point scale,

with 1= *strongly disagree*, and 5= *strongly agree*. Total scores range from 5-60, with

higher scores reflecting a greater sense of family cohesion. Sample items include, "We

cannot talk to each other about the sadness we feel" and "We feel accepted for what we

are". Scale validation studies have demonstrated concurrent and construct validity, with a

Cronbach's alpha of .92 for the General Functioning subscale (Ridenour, Daley, & Reich,

1999). Internal consistency for FAD in this study's sample is .896.

Subjective Wellbeing

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener, Emmons,

Larsen, and Griffin (1985) to measure one's perceived quality of life, or the subjective

appraisal of one's life. The scale consists of 5 items that are rated on a 7-point scale, with

1= *strongly disagree*, and 7= *strongly agree.* Total scores range from 5-35, with higher

scores reflecting a greater quality of life and perceived satisfaction. Sample items include

"I am satisfied with my life". As an overall measure of perceived quality of life, SWLS

has shown good internal reliability with alpha coefficients ranging from .79-.89 (Vera-

Villarroel, Urzua, Pavez, Celis-Atenas, & Silva, 2012). Internal consistency for SWLS in

this study's sample is .895.

The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) was developed by Watson,

Clark, and Tellegen (1988) to measure both positive and negative affect--the affective

components of subjective wellbeing, and include items such as "attentive" and

"interested", and "distressed" and "upset", respectively. The scale consists of 20-items;

10 on each subscale of positive and negative affect. Items are rated on a 5-point scale,

with 1= *very slightly or not at all*, and 5= *extremely*. The total score for each subscale

ranges from 10-50, with higher scores indicating higher levels of either positive or

negative affect. The scale development study has indicated appropriate convergent and

discriminant validity, adequate internal consistencies, and test-retest reliabilities over a 2-

month time period. Alpha coefficients are .88 for the PA scale, and .87 for the NA scale

(Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Internal consistency for PA in this study's sample is

.878 and .872 for NA.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis Plan**</div>

Preliminary Analysis

Following the completion of data collection, data was exported into SPSS

software and was then cleaned. Participants who answered "no" to any of the three

inclusion criteria questions (i.e. age 18-25, enrolled in a 4-year college/university, and

identifying as working or lower class) were removed from the dataset. Participants who

answered "yes" to these criteria questions, but input data that indicated they were above

the age of 25, not enrolled in a 4-year college/university, and/or identified as middle class

or above, were also removed prior to analysis. Cases with less than an 80% response-rate

per scale were removed. Mean scale scores were entered for participants who answered

80% or greater of each scale, but had missing items.

Preliminary analyses were run in order to understand the nature of the data

obtained. First, frequency and proportion of all categorical demographic variables were

examined. Second, means, standard deviations, kurtosis, and skewness of all continuous

demographic and study variables were examined. Third, to assess internal reliability,

Cronbach's alphas for all study variables were examined. Finally, bivariate correlations

and simple regression analyses were examined for all continuous study variables to determine which variables and pathways proposed via the exploratory models are significantly related and predictive, respectively.

Main Analysis

The original research hypotheses were tested via six mediated regression models. The proposed models examined the relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and subjective wellbeing (where positive affect, negative affect, and satisfaction with life were evaluated separately), with school belongingness as a mediator; and the relationship between social connectedness to the lower/working class and subjective wellbeing, with family cohesion as a mediator. In order to analyze the effect of the mediating variables of school belongingness and family cohesion on the relationship between social class connectedness and subjective wellbeing, mediated regression was used. This analysis was done in three steps (Frazier, Tix, and Barron, 2004; Baron & Kenny, 1986). The first step was to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the predictor variable (social class connectedness) and the outcome (subjective wellbeing). Following this step, the relationship between the predictor and the mediator (school belongingness and family cohesion) was analyzed. Lastly, the final step was to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the mediator and the outcome. All three steps were conducted via regression analyses. After these steps were completed, one final analysis was done to determine "that the strength of the relation between the predictor and outcome is significantly reduced when the mediator is added to the model" (Frazier, Tix, and Barron, 2004, p. 126). This was

done using Hayes (2009) process analysis for mediated regression via SPSS. In order to

declare statistical significance for these relationships, a *p* value of less than .05 was used.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Frequency and proportion of all categorical demographic variables can be seen in table 1 as well as the means for all continuous demographic variables. Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and internal consistency of all continuous study variables are presented in table 2. Seven of seven variables showed minimal skew (skewness < 2.0) and kurtosis (kurtosis < 7.0).

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

Age	M=20.6 (SD= 1.77)
Gender	
Woman	73.3%
Man	24.3%
Transgender	1.7%
Racial/Ethnic Identity	
White	34.4%
Black/African-American	10.4%
Asian/Pacific-Islander	19.1%
Hispanic/Latino/a	27.1%
Multiracial	6.3%
Other	2.1%

Social Class of Origin

Poverty/Poor	6.3%
Low-Income	25.3%
Working-Poor	12.5%
Lower-Class	8.3%
Working-Class	24.7%
Lower-Middle-Class	22.2%
Other	0.3%

Academic Year

Freshman	14.9%
Sophomore	22.2%
Junior	26%
Senior	28.5%
5th year or higher	8%

Belong to a TRiO Program

Yes	28.5%
No	67.4%

Highest Education Level for Mother

Less than high school	26%
High school	36.8%
2-year college	16%

4-year college	11.1%
Graduate/Professional School	5.9%
Don't know/Unsure	3.8%

Highest Education Level for Father

Less than high school	27.4%
High school	38.5%
2-year college	9.7%
4-year college	11.1%
Graduate/Professional School	3.8%
Don't know/Unsure	9%

Note: $N = 288$ for Age; $N = 287$ for Social Class of Origin, Academic Year, Highest Education Level for Mother, and Highest Education Level for Father; $N = 286$ for Gender and Racial/Ethnic Identity; and $N = 276$ for Belonging to a TRiO Program

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and internal consistency for study variables

	SCMC	SCLC	PSSM	FAD	SWL	PA	NA
Mean	18.74	24.29	66.55	30.75	18.94	34.39	24.72
SD	7.315	6.090	9.952	8.484	7.213	7.516	8.201
Skewness	-0.082	-0.614	-0.940	-0.097	-0.045	-0.352	0.433
Kurtosis	-0.812	0.324	2.629	-0.583	-0.802	-0.008	-0.333
α	0.925	0.898	0.864	0.896	0.895	0.878	0.872

Note: $N = 288$ for all study variables. SCMC= Social Connectedness in Middle Class; SCLC= Social Connectedness in Working and Lower Class; PSSM= The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale; FAD= The Family Assessment Device-General Functioning Subscale; SWLS= The Satisfaction with Life Scale; PA= Positive Affect; NA= Negative Affect.

Bivariate correlations for all continuous study variable are presented in table 3. All correlations between variables are statistically significant except for the relationships between social connectedness to the working and lower class (SCLC) and all other study variables, including: social connectedness to the middle class (SCMC), school belongingness (PSSM), family cohesion (FAD), satisfaction with life (SWLS), positive affect (PA), and negative affect (NA). All significant relationships were significant at $p < .001$, except for the relationship between social connectedness to the middle class (SCMC) and negative affect (NA), which was significant at $p < .05$. Significant correlations ranged from .135 (SCMC with NA) to .515 (PSSM with PA) in magnitude. These results indicate that connectedness to the middle class, sense of school belongingness, family cohesion, and subjective wellbeing are all significantly related. More specifically, when an individual identifies as being more socially connected to the middle class, their level of school belongingness, family cohesion, and subjective wellbeing is more likely to be increased.

Table 3. Bivariate correlations for study variables

	SCMC	SCLC	PSSM	FAD	SWLS	PA	NA
SCMC	1						
SCLC	-0.112	1					
PSSM	.290**	-0.013	1				
FAD	.284**	-0.037	.398**	1			
SWLS	.283**	-0.052	.461**	.497**	1		
PA	.222**	-0.005	.515**	.315**	.491**	1	
NA	-.135*	-0.065	-.387**	-.452**	-.494**	-.263**	1

Note: $N = 288$ for all study variables. SCMC= Social Connectedness in Middle Class; SCLC= Social Connectedness in Working and Lower Class; PSSM= The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale; FAD= The Family Assessment Device-General Functioning Subscale; SWLS= The Satisfaction with Life Scale; PA= Positive Affect; NA= Negative Affect. $*p < .05$, two-tailed. $** p < .001$, two-tailed.

Simple regression analyses were conducted in order to examine significant predictive relationships among the pathways proposed in the hypothesized study models. Results can be observed via table 4. Analyses indicate that social connectedness to the middle class (SCMC) is significantly predictive of school belongingness (SB) and subjective wellbeing (SWL, PA, NA). Also evidenced through these analyses is that school belongingness (SB) and family cohesion (FAD) significantly predict subjective wellbeing (SWL, PA, NA). Conversely, social connectedness to the working and lower class (SCLS) was not shown to significantly predict family cohesion (FAD) or subjective wellbeing (SWL, PA, NA).

Table 4: Simple Regression Analyses of Study Variables
Dependent Variable: SWL

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	t	R^2	F
SCMC	0.279	0.056	0.283	4.986**	0.080	24.865**
SCLC	-0.062	0.070	-0.052	-0.886	0.003	0.784
PSSM	0.334	0.038	0.461	8.779**	0.212	77.071**
FAD	0.423	0.044	0.497	9.686**	0.247	93.817**

Dependent Variable: PA

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	t	R^2	F
SCMC	0.228	0.059	0.222	3.849**	0.049	14.814**
SCLC	-0.006	0.073	-0.005	-0.085	0.000	0.007
PSSM	0.389	0.038	0.515	10.156**	0.265	103.137**
FAD	0.279	0.050	0.315	5.617**	0.099	31.556**

Dependent Variable: NA

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	t	R^2	F
SCMC	-0.152	0.006	-0.135	-2.309*	0.018	5.330*
SCLC	0.088	0.079	0.065	1.103	0.004	1.216
PSSM	-0.319	-0.387	-0.387	-7.102**	0.150	50.442**
FAD	-0.437	0.051	-0.452	-8.581**	0.205	73.634**

Dependent Variable: PSSM

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	t	R^2	F
SCMC	0.394	0.077	.290	5.118**	0.084	26.198**

Dependent Variable: FAD

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	t	R^2	F
SCLC	-0.052	0.082	-.037	-0.634	0.001	0.402

Note: $N = 288$ for all study variables. SCMC= Social Connectedness in Middle Class;
SCLC= Social Connectedness in Working and Lower Class; PSSM= The Psychological

Sense of School Membership Scale; FAD= The Family Assessment Device-General Functioning Subscale; SWLS= The Satisfaction with Life Scale; PA= Positive Affect; NA= Negative Affect.
* p < .05, two-tailed. ** p < .001, two-tailed.
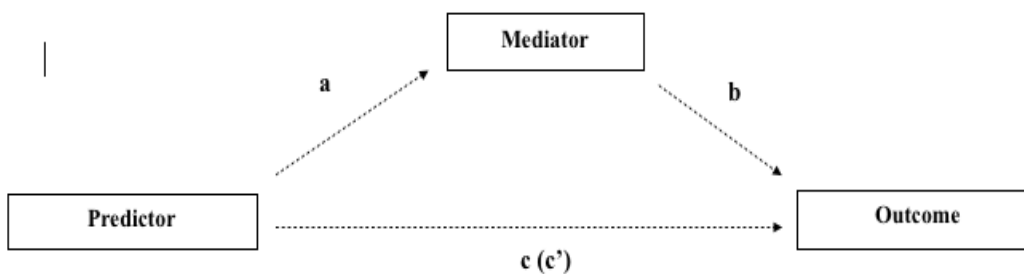
Main Analyses: Mediated Regression

Main analyses consisted of testing six mediated regression models, which were conducted using Process Analysis (Hayes, 2009) via SPSS. Regression models included: the relationships between (1) middle class connectedness, school belongingness, and satisfaction with life; (2) middle class connectedness, school belongingness, and positive affect; (3) middle class connectedness, school belongingness, and negative affect; (4) working/lower class connectedness, family cohesion, and satisfaction with life; (5) working/lower class connectedness, family cohesion, and positive affect; and (6) working/lower class connectedness, family cohesion, and negative affect.

A total of four pathways (a, b, c, and c') per model were statistically analyzed, in order to determine whether each exploratory model is considered a full or partial mediation model. These pathways are shown in Figure 3. In doing so, path a was analyzed first. Path a is the relationship between the predictor variable (SCMC, SCLC) and the mediator variable (PSSM, FAD). Next, "path b" was calculated. Path b is the relationship between the mediator variable and the outcome variable (SWL, PA, NA). Third, "path c" was examined, which is the direct pathway between the predictor variable and the outcome variable after the mediator was added to the model. Lastly, path c' was analyzed, which is the indirect pathway between the predictor variable and the outcome

variable. Path c' becomes the indirect pathway between predictor and outcome once the mediator is added to the model's equation.

If path c' is significant, this means that the model is mediated by the mediating variable (e.g. school belongingness, family cohesion). In order for there to be full mediation effects, path c', the indirect effect, must be significant without path c, the direct effect, being significant. This indicates that the mediating variable is fully responsible for the relationship between the predictor and the outcome. If both path c' and path c are significant (both the indirect and direct effect are significant), this means that the model is partially mediated, indicating that both the predictor variable and the mediator variable impact the relationship between the predictor and the outcome.

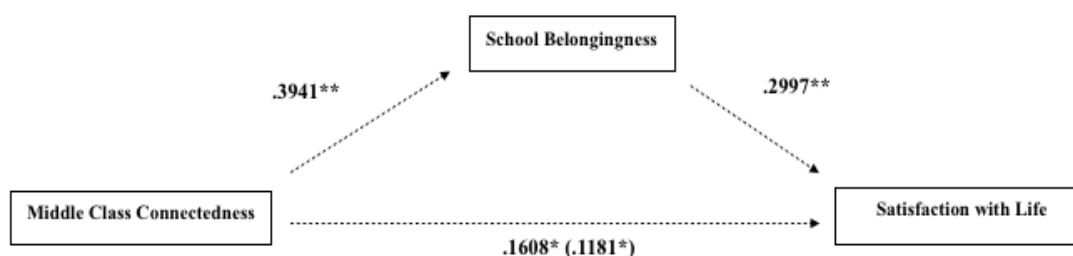Figure 3. Mediated Regression Model with Proposed Pathways

Outcomes from the mediated regression analyses are presented in Figures 4 through 9. Looking at the first mediated regression model via Figure 4, results indicate that the predictive relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and satisfaction with life is partially mediated by school belongingness, as both the indirect

pathway, path c' (Beta = .1181), and the direct pathway, path c (Beta= .1608) are

significant. This suggests that the relationship between social connectedness to the

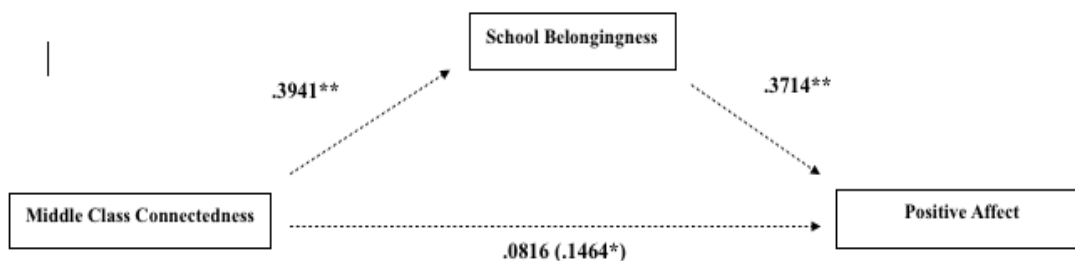middle class and satisfaction with life is partially accounted for by school belongingness.

Figure 4. Mediated Regression Model Including Social Connectedness to the Middle
Class, School Belongingness, and Satisfaction with Life.

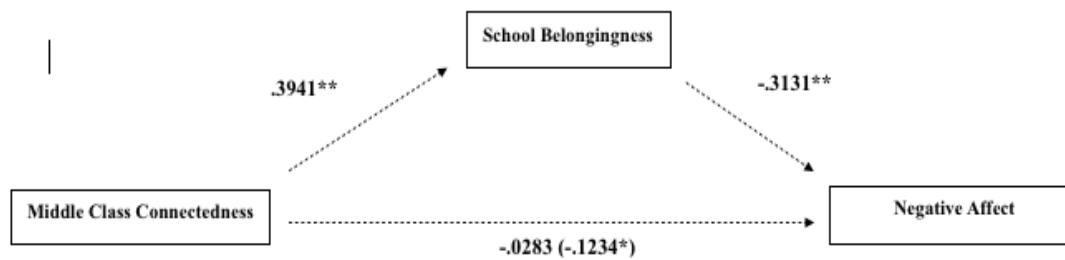*Note*: N= 288. * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .001

Figures 5 and 6 depict a fully mediated regression model between social

connectedness to the middle class, school belongingness, and positive and negative

affect, respectively. Results show that paths c (Beta = .0816, Beta = .0283), the direct

effects of the predictors on the outcomes, are not statistically significant. This is

combined with the fact that confidence intervals (at 95%) for path c' (Beta = .1464, Beta

= .1234) do not contain the number 0, which denotes statistical significance for the

indirect effect of the predictor on the outcome (Hayes, 2009). Additionally, in these two

models, paths a (Beta = .3941) and b (Beta = .3714, Beta = .3131) have statistical

significance, also providing evidence the school belongingness fully mediates the

relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and positive and negative

affect.

Figure 5. Mediated Regression Model Including Social Class Connectedness to the Middle Class, School Belongingness, and Positive Affect.

Note: N= 288. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

Figure 6. Mediated Regression Model Including Social Connectedness to the Middle Class, School Belongingness, and Negative Affect.

Note: N= 288. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

While two of the three mediation models examining school belongingness as a mediator between social connectedness to the middle class and subjective wellbeing were statistically significant as full mediation models and one was significant as a partial mediation model; none of the three mediation models examining family cohesion as a mediator between social connectedness to the working and lower class and subjective

wellbeing were statistically significant. Instead, the only pathways that show statistical

significance is path b (Beta = .4125, Beta = .4357, Beta = .2795) for all models, which

can be observed via figures 7, 8, and 9. These results indicate that within the proposed

mediated regression models, only family cohesion predicts subjective wellbeing, and that

social connectedness to the working and lower class is not predictive of either family

cohesion or subjective wellbeing.

Figure 7. Mediation Model Including Social Connectedness to the Working and Lower
Class, Family Cohesion, and Satisfaction with Life.
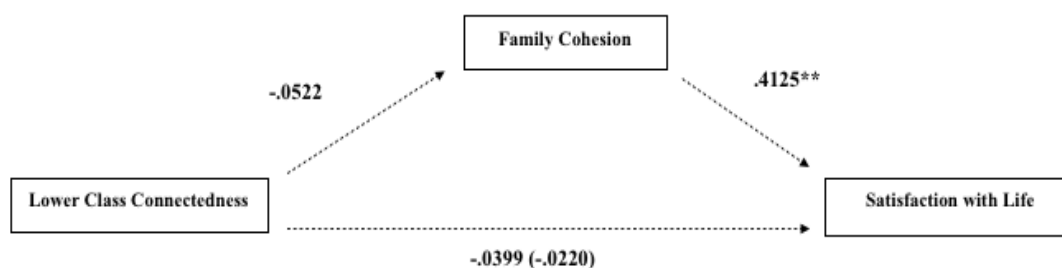
Note: N= 288. * p < .05. ** p < .001

Figure 8. Mediation Model Including Social Connectedness to the Working and Lower
Class, Family Cohesion, and Positive Affect.
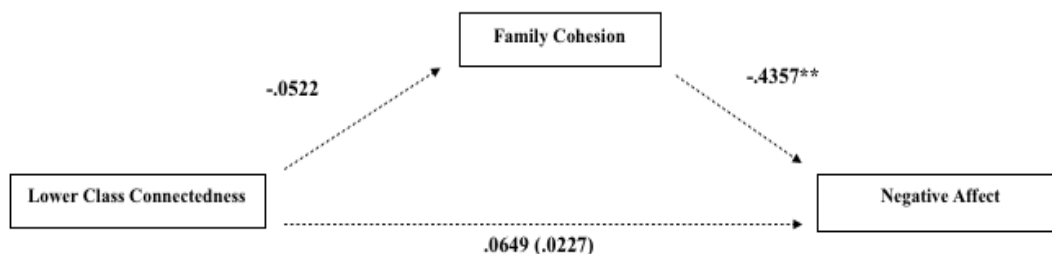
Note: N= 288. * p < .05. ***p < .001

Figure 9. Mediation Model Including Social Connectedness to the Working and Lower Class, Family Cohesion, and Negative Affect.
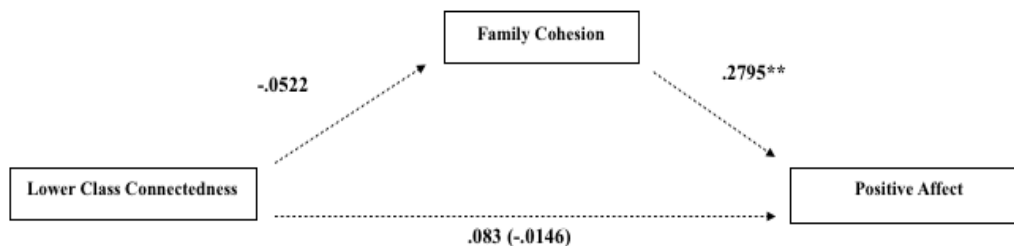
Note: N= 288. * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .001

Summary

The data that were collected and analyzed via this study helped to answer the exploratory questions that were proposed, including whether or not social class connectedness has an impact on subjective wellbeing, and if so, whether school belongingness and family cohesion mediate those relationships. In looking at the first hypothesis, data confirms that school belongingness fully mediates the relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and positive and negative affect (though, not with satisfaction with life). When evaluating the second hypothesis, data indicate that while family cohesion is predictive of subjective wellbeing, it does not mediate the relationship between social connectedness to the working and lower class and subjective wellbeing, nor does the predictor significantly predict the outcome. The next chapter will discuss the impact of these results, clinical implications, future directions, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This is one of the first studies to research the relationships between social class connectedness and subjective wellbeing, and whether or not school belongingness and/or family cohesion mediate these relationships. Since this is one of the first examinations of acculturative and enculturative factors related to social class and its impact on subjective wellbeing, important clinical implications and directions for future research are able to be gleaned. In building upon the extant literature that highlights the significance of social connectedness, acculturation and enculturation, and subjective wellbeing; this research is able to contribute to the field of counseling psychology in nuanced ways. As such, the findings of this study indicate that an overall sense of belonging (particularly as it relates to the mainstream social class, school, and family) is integral to an individual's subjective wellbeing. Given these results, we have become privy to the necessity of facilitating and/or fostering a sense of connectedness to these variables for college students who identify as originally coming from a lower or working class background.

Preliminary Analysis Discussion

The bivariate correlations that are observed amongst the study variables of interest indicate a number of things. As previously highlighted, social connectedness to the middle class is significantly positively correlated with four of the six other continuous study variables (i.e. sense of school belongingness, family cohesion, satisfaction with life,

64

and positive affect). These results indicate that when a working or lower class-identified college student feels a sense of connectedness to the middle class, they are more likely to exhibit a greater sense of school belongingness, stronger family cohesion, increased satisfaction with life, and higher positive affect. Conversely, social connectedness to the middle class was significantly negatively correlated with negative affect. This suggests that when social connectedness to the middle class increases, working or lower class-identified students are more likely to endorse decreased negative affect. While the aforementioned bivariate correlations showed statistical significance, not all continuous variables were related to each other. Social connectedness to the working or lower class was not shown to have any statistically significant relationships to any of the other study variables. The lack of correlation between lower class connectedness and all continuous variables will be expounded upon in the limitations section, as it may be an artifact of range restriction. These relationships, both significant and not, provide a strong foundation for clinical implications associated with working and lower class-identified college students, as well as future directions for research, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

In looking at the relationships between study variables, outcomes similar to the bivariate correlations are observed. Social connectedness to the middle class was shown to be associated with a greater sense of school belongingness and subjective wellbeing (SWL, PA, NA). Additionally, school belongingness and family cohesion were determined to be related to increased subjective wellbeing as well. Similarly, we are able to observe that social connectedness to the working or lower class is not related to a greater sense of family cohesion or increased subjective wellbeing. While this is one of

the first studies to exam enculturative factors and social connectedness as they relate to social class, these findings deviate from existing studies that highlight the positive outcomes associated with enculturation (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2011; Yoon, Jung, Lee, and Felix-Mora, 2012; Wei et al., 2012). The importance of these findings will be further examined as we move forward.

These results are consistent with already existing data, highlighting the significance of the impact that school belongingness, family cohesion, and acculturation have on subjective wellbeing (Pittman & Richmond, 1998; Hoffman et al., 2003; Bottom, Ferrari, Matteo, & Todd, 2013; London, 1989; Kotrlik & Harrison, 1989; Penick & Jepsen, 1992; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Yoon & Lee, 2010; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2011; Yoon, Jung, Lee, and Felix-Mora, 2012; Wei et al., 2012). It was observed that when these variables increase, subjective wellbeing also increases. As previously discussed, Higher levels of subjective wellbeing are accounted for by greater satisfaction with life, increased positive affect, and decreased negative affect, and has been shown that higher subjective wellbeing reflects optimal levels of functioning that are traditionally valued by individuals and U.S. society as a whole, including: higher levels of productivity, greater success, stronger social relationships, and increased health and longevity (Diener, 2000; Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Parron, 2001; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Lyubomisky, King, & Diener, 2005; Harter, Schmidt, Asplund, Killham, & Agrawal, 2010; Edmand, 2012). As such, these findings can be utilized to expand upon the importance of social connectedness and its influence on subjective wellbeing.

Main Analysis Discussion

Results from the mediated regression analyses are somewhat mixed. None of the mediation models that used social connectedness to the working or lower class as the predictor variable, with family cohesion as the mediator, were statistically significant. Based on the results of the preliminary analyses, these findings are not surprising. This is because social connectedness to the working or lower class was shown not to be related to family cohesion or subjective wellbeing. As such, it is understood that social connectedness to the working or lower class has little association with subjective wellbeing. Based on these data, enculturative factors associated with one's social class of origin neither helps increase, or decrease, overall subjective wellbeing. Though, in examining these mediation models, family cohesion was still observed to be related to increased subjective wellbeing at a rate nearly identical to those observed within the simple regression models, with statistical significance at p < .001. This information underscores the importance of better understanding the impact that enculturative factors related to social class have on an individual. Equally important to this quest, is the necessity to further explore the ways in which family cohesion are associated with an individual's overall wellbeing, which may be caused by sample demographics and characteristics, and/or a lack of validity regarding the measure used with this population.

In examining whether the relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and subjective wellbeing may be better accounted for by an increased sense of school belongingness, we learn that it depends on the measure of subjective wellbeing. Interestingly, school belongingness was found to fully mediate the relationships between social class connectedness to the middle class and positive and negative affect, but only

partially mediate its relationship with satisfaction with life. So, while social

connectedness to the middle class is related to increased satisfaction with life, school

belongingness only partially responsible for that relationship.

These findings are in-line with the existing literature that highlight the benefits of

acculturative factors and a sense of school belongingness (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Yoon,

Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2011; Yoon, Jung, Lee, and Felix-Mora, 2012; Wei

et al., 2012; Pittman & Richmond, 1998; Hoffman et al., 2003; Bottom, Ferrari, Matteo,

& Todd, 2013). As such, it was expected that school belongingness would mediate the

relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and subjective wellbeing as

previous research suggests that social connectedness to mainstream culture, which is

often facilitated via dominant social communities (i.e. school environment), is associated

with greater psychological functioning (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Yoon & Lee, 2010;

Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2011; Yoon, Jung, Lee, and Felix-Mora,

2012; Wei et al., 2012). The finding that school belongingness only partially mediates the

relationship between social connectedness to the middle class and subjective wellbeing,

indicates that further research needs to be conducted in order to gain a better

understanding of why this is the case, and in what ways social connectedness to the

middle class help contribute to one's subjective wellbeing.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social class connectedness

on subjective wellbeing (including positive and negative affect and satisfaction with life)

and whether or not school belongingness and family cohesion mediate these

relationships, as previous literature have suggested that acculturation, enculturation, and

social connectedness to school and family help facilitate and promote healthier

psychological functioning and overall subjective wellbeing (Yoon et al., 2013; Bottom, Ferrari, Matteo, & Todd, 2013; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996). The first hypothesized relationship, in which school belongingness would mediate the relationship between middle class connectedness and subjective wellbeing, held true for full mediation when looking at the affective components of subjective wellbeing (positive and negative affect), and held true for partial mediation when looking at the cognitive component of subjective wellbeing (satisfaction with life). The second hypothesized relationship, where family cohesion would mediate the relationship between lower class connectedness and subjective wellbeing, did not prove to be statistically significant. In looking more closely at these findings, it is important to explore the clinical implications that can be derived from these results, as well as future research directions that may be most helpful to further expand and clarify this area of study, particularly as these findings stray from more recent research highlighting the importance of enculturative factors buffering against negative mental health outcomes and wellbeing (Yoon et al, 2013).

Clinical Implications

The clinical implications from this study are both vast and somewhat broad. Given that this is an exploratory study that is one of the first of its kind, implications should be evaluated and applied with a critical lens. The finding that school belongingness fully mediates the relationship between middle class connectedness and positive and negative affect, and partially mediates the relationship with satisfaction with life, is valuable information. These finding underscore the necessity of fostering a sense of connection to the middle class by increasing an overall sense of school belongingness for college students who identify as originally coming from a working or lower class

background. Having a sense of belonging to the dominant cultural group has consistently

shown to be impactful on promoting positive psychological outcomes (Berry, 1998), and

this study takes it one step further by showing the necessity of facilitating and promoting

a sense of school community and belonging for this population of students.

Having a sense of connection to one's school, its community members, the

faculty, the staff, and to feel supported by the school's policies and procedures, may help

in garnering an overall sense of connection to the dominant social class and the school as

a whole. This may then lead to an increase in subjective wellbeing, with these students

then being more likely to exhibit greater rates of retention and academic completion,

higher GPA, and increased physical and mental health (Pittman & Richmond, 1998;

Hoffman et al., 2003; Bottom, Ferrari, Matteo, & Todd, 2013). There are both existing

programs that work to facilitate this level of connection, as well as potential options that

have not yet been explored or instated.

Programming that is produced and promoted at the institutional level can help

foster a sense of belonging to one's school community and help create and/or continue to

facilitate a healthy acculturation process toward the middle class. Existing programs, like

TRiO Student Support Services, learning and living communities, life skills-based classes

for smaller freshman and transfer-student cohorts, and the like, can work toward creating

a sense of community and cohesion for working and lower class-identified college

students and should continue to be promoted toward students who identify as coming

from this vulnerable population (Pittman & Richmond, 1998; Hoffman, et al., 2003).

Additionally, it may be helpful to incorporate students from varying social classes within

said groups, as it may facilitate the acculturation process that may likely occur during a

working or lower-class-identified student's college experience, particularly during their early years (Pittman & Richmond, 1998). In doing so, it is important that these individuals are able to build a sense of social connection with others and with the school community as a whole. This is based on the finding that social connectedness has been found to have protective factors throughout the acculturation process (Safdar, Lay, & Struthers, 2003; Yah & Inose, 2003).

While the second hypothesis was not supported, there are still valuable implications given the significant relationships that were and were not observed. As both preliminary and main analyses show, the level of social connectedness to the working or lower class is not related to family cohesion and subjective wellbeing. These findings require further research and evaluation in an effort to better understand the experiences and adjustment processes of college students coming from a working or lower class background. Given this information, we learn that enculturative factors associated with the social class of college students coming from a working or lower class background are less important than that of their level of family cohesion. While it is too soon to write off social class enculturation completely, it may be important to focus future endeavors in supporting these students through efforts that promote and help facilitate a sense of family cohesion. Levine and Nidiffer (1996) found that early intervention and mentorship played a large role in college success, some of which can be attributed to family involvement in the students' academic processes. As such, it may behoove colleges and universities to incorporate familial involvement in their students' school experience throughout the students' tenure. This can take different forms, and may likely include things such as parental/familial orientation sessions, as well as seminars/coursework that

highlight the individuation process while also maintaining and strengthening family connections. Such programming would likely benefit individuals when instated even prior to their college entrance, such as during middle and high school. By continuing this at the college and university level, it would hopefully bolster the already acquired effects, while focusing on the potential acculturative stress/difficulties that may emerge during the college process. In promoting family cohesion prior to and during one's college experience, these students will then be more likely to exhibit greater subjective wellbeing, in addition to greater academic success and persistence (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997).

Other ways to help build and promote school belongingness and family cohesion, while also aiding in a working or lower class-identified individual's acculturation process, have not yet been explored. It can be surmised that in addition to institutional programming, interventions at the individualized level may also be beneficial to these students. As such, faculty, housing staff, and counseling services staff should receive proper training that allows for them to understand the nuanced adjustment that these students face as they transition into a four-year institution. It has been documented that students coming from a working or lower class background are likely to experience feelings of fear, stress, and anxiety as they first leave their familial unit, shift away from their traditional roles and home environment, all while transitioning to a new academic institution (London, 1998).

Faculty and staff (particularly counseling services staff) who are well-versed in the nuanced experiences that these students encounter as they transition into college can help them navigate this difficult process. Navarette Vivero & Jenkins (1999) provide a set

of guidelines for clinicians who are working with individuals moving from non-dominant to dominant cultures. They highlight that these professionals maintain an open-stance and an awareness of the painful and difficult emotions associated with this experience, while also being understanding and accepting of who they are, where they come from, and where they are at with regard to this developmental process. In promoting culturally competent counseling services for these individuals, they may also be more likely to negotiate the acculturative difficulties that they are experiencing, while also gaining a sense of acceptance and community.

Future Directions

This study examines the effects of various relationships incorporating both well-researched constructs (i.e. school belongingness, family cohesion, subjective wellbeing) and more novel concepts and ideas (i.e. social class acculturation/enculturation). This study presents the field with findings that are in line with previous research results with racial/ethnic minorities (Yoon & Lee, 2010; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams, and Cleary, 2011; Pittman & Richmond, 1998; Dillion, De La Rosa, & Ibañez, 2013), as well as new findings that can benefit the literature and further research within the field of counseling psychology. In looking at the results, it is important to highlight that findings that have been observed in prior studies (i.e. positive outcomes associated with social connectedness) (Palomar-Lever, 2007; Sarason & Sarason, 1996; Uchino, Caioppo & Kiecholy-Glaser, 1996), continue to hold true, even when looking at a particular niche population (i.e. emerging adult college students identifying as originally coming from a working or lower class background). Additionally, through this research, we become aware of more novel findings, such as the relationship between middle class

connectedness (acculturation) and subjective wellbeing, as well as the lack of a relationship between working or lower class connectedness (enculturation) and subjective wellbeing. These outcomes point the field in the direction of new areas for research which can be built upon for years to come.

Since the relationships between family cohesion and subjective wellbeing and school belongingness and subjective wellbeing have extensive supporting evidence, future research should put its focus on social connectedness to social class groups. As this is one of the earliest studies examining what is essentially social class acculturation and enculturation, it is pivotal that future studies expand the research within this area. As such, it may likely be helpful for the use of qualitative research in examining the experiences of individuals coming from a working or lower class background. With this, the field of counseling psychology would be able to more closely observe and therefore, glean the overall process that an individual coming from a lower social class background may experience in a middle class-dominant society.

Additionally, since social connectedness to lower/working class was shown neither to be related to, nor predictive of family cohesion or subjective wellbeing, examining how the enculturation process unfolds for these individuals may allow for the development of more nuanced studies to address and assess more accurate and appropriate constructs. While these data indicate that enculturative factors do not contribute to an individual's subjective wellbeing, it may be too nascent of a concept to draw firm conclusions at this time. Instead, it is suggested the future research continue to explore the enculturative processes associated with those coming from a working or lower class background.

Looking at these objectives within the context of existing literature, future research should first be dedicated to the qualitative study of acculturative and enculturative factors as they relate to social class. It may be necessary to ask the question of what the acculturation and enculturation process looks like for individuals coming from non-dominant social class groups, particularly those coming from the working and lower classes.

Because this study looked exclusively at emerging adult-aged college students, it is suggested that future studies aim to examine and understand the acculturative/enculturative processes of individuals across the life-span. Cohort and/or longitudinal qualitative studies can allow for valuable insights into what the acculturation/enculturation process may look like at varying points within an individual's development. By building a strong foundation of what these processes encompass and entail (e.g. familial relations, attitudes toward self and others, biases, discrimination, values, relationships, views toward other social classes, political implications, social implications, etc.), further research can build upon these data to draw on even more extensive connections and relationships that individuals coming from a working or lower class background may experience. Additionally, scale development studies that examine social class acculturation and enculturation are needed to further advance this area of research.

Lastly, it is may be beneficial to further examine the data through a variety of different statistical analyses. For one, it can be enlightening to rearrange the predictor and outcome variables of the tested mediation models. As such, using subjective wellbeing as the predictor variable for social class connectedness, with school belongingness and

family cohesion as mediators, will allow for potential additional insights to be made. For instance, if satisfaction with life were to contribute to greater school belongingness and greater social class acculturation, then various programatic and institutional implications can be addressed in such a way to help foster greater satisfaction of life amongst college students that identify as coming from a working or lower class background. Additionally, other statistical analyses, such as structural equation modeling, would also allow for a more sophisticated and comprehensive analysis that would help control predictor variables, while also enabling the analysis of mediation and/or moderation variables.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations, and they are important to consider when evaluating its findings. First, it was not assessed as to whether or not the participants in this study went to school close to home or further away. As such, this may affect the data, particularly as it relates to family cohesion. It can be presumed that students who attended college close to home may have had greater opportunities to connect with their families, particularly if they were living with them at the time. To the contrary, those living with their families may also have had greater opportunities to engage in conflict with their familial unit, thus also impacting the level of family cohesion. Either way, the amount of physical distance that one has with their family is a factor that may likely affect the data and should ideally be controlled for. In moving forward, it may be helpful to include students who either only live with or live close to their families, or those that live far away from them and do not have as frequent contact.

Another limitation of this study is that it included students from all different types of four-year colleges and universities. While it is beneficial to external validity and

generalization to have drawn participants from a large pool of colleges and universities attended; it also indicates that there was no discernment between whether students attended institutions that were public or private, small, medium, or large, religious or not, commuter or residential, etc. While including all colleges and universities in the inclusion criteria will allow for more generalizable results, the type of institution attended can have a bearing on the various constructs assessed in this study. As such, if a student were to attend a large, state institution, they may be more likely to feel less connected to the school, depending on what resources are available to them and whether they utilize them or not. Additionally, a student who attends an elite, private institution may have more difficulty adjusting to the general culture and environment of the school, particularly is they are coming from a lower social class background. Thus, future research should look at assessing the type of institution attended and use it as a variable of interest, in order to draw more distinct conclusions about how the type of college attended may affect the results. Additionally, it may be important to further expand this research to include lower class-identified students who are studying at 2-year community colleges, in order to glean the ways in which social class enculturation and school belongingness may impact their subjective wellbeing within a different higher educational setting.

One additional limitation is the existence of range restriction that exists within the sample when measuring social connectedness to the working and lower class (M= 18-30, with a total score maximum of 35). While it is unclear as to whether this is an artifact of the measure used, sample characteristics, or a lack of a clearly defined construct, this may be able to be rectified with the data of more participants in the future.

Lastly, the scales used to assess social connectedness to the middle class and the working and lower class (SCMC and SCLC) have not been validated for use when assessing social class connectedness. While this was chosen due to the fact that these measures have been used to assess social connectedness/acculturative/enculturative factors amongst racial- and ethnic-minority groups, it is not entirely certain as to whether or not they accurately assess social class connectedness. It would be helpful to conduct validation studies with this population in the future, and/or working toward the creation of scales that examine the acculturation/enculturation process/levels of social class groups.

Conclusion

While the findings of this study did not fully support either of the hypothesis proposed, valuable information that can go on to guide future research and support the development and/or strengthening of programming at the institutional level was still observed. This study highlights the importance of middle class acculturative factors on subjective wellbeing for individuals identifying from a working or lower class background. We have observed that school belongingness fully mediates this relationship when assessing positive/negative affect, and is also predictive of satisfaction with life when assessed on its own. These outcomes highlight the importance of academic institutions fostering a sense of community and belonging, particularly for vulnerable populations, such as those coming from the working or lower class. Additionally, while social class enculturation was shown not to be related to family cohesion or subjective wellbeing, results indicate that there is more research that needs to be done in this area before drawing hard-lined conclusion. Finally, the study has reinforced the importance of

family cohesion on subjective wellbeing for this population, and underscores the need for familial interventions at the higher educational level.

This research is the first of its kind. It is one of the only studies to examine acculturative and enculturative factors as they relate to social class. This study provides a unique understanding of how acculturative factors are pertinent to the wellbeing of working and lower class-identified college students. And while this is valuable information that presents several clinical implications at the institutional and individualized levels, it only looks at the emerging adulthood, college population. Due to the fact that the United States is experiencing a shrinking middle class, widening social class gaps, and more traditionally-based middle class services, amenities, and resources being made available to people of all social classes; it is important for U.S. society, and particularly those within the field of counseling psychology, to understand how the acculturation and enculturation process pertaining social class impacts individuals at varying levels. This study serves as a springboard for future research endeavors that can help in informing a variety of service professionals within an ever-changing and shifting sociopolitical environment.

APPENDIX A:

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Friday, March 27, 2015

Dear Kristen Adams,

   On Friday, March 27, 2015 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for confirmation of exemption titled "**The Impact of Social Class Connectedness, School Belongingness, and Family Cohesion on Lower Class-Identified College Students' Subjective Wellbeing**". Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that this human subject research project is exempt from the IRB oversight requirements according to 45 CFR 46.101.

   If you make changes to the research procedures that could affect the exempt status of this project, your proposal should be reevaluated by the IRB to confirm it is still exempt from the IRB oversight requirements. To modify this proposal, please submit an Amendment/Project Update Application using the online CAP program. Complete details about the application process and your responsibilities can be found on the Office for Research Services web site.

   Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Application. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #1706 or IRB application number #3187.

Best wishes for your research,

Raymond H. Dye, Jr., Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B:

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Research Study: The Impact of Social Class Connectedness, School Belongingness, and Family Cohesion on Lower Class-Identified College Students' Subjective Wellbeing

Dear Participant,

I am currently a doctoral student in the counseling psychology program at Loyola University Chicago. I am currently completing my dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Eunju Yoon, and am examining the experiences and effects that school, family, and social class have on wellbeing in lower class identified college students. I am requesting your help on this important task. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, and once finished, you will be eligible to enter a raffle to win 1 of 12 $25 gift cards.

In order to participate, you must be:
- between the ages of 18 and 25
- currently enrolled in a 4-year college or university
- identify as originally coming from a lower social class background (e.g. low-income, working-class, lower-middle-class, etc.)

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click the link below. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Kristen Adams, M.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate in Counseling Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX C:

INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: The Impact of Social Class Connectedness, School Belongingness, and Family Cohesion on Lower Class-Identified College Students' Subjective Wellbeing
Principal Investigator: Kristen Adams, M.Ed.
Faculty Sponsor: Eunju Yoon, Ph.D.

Introduction: You are being asked to participate in a study being conducted by Kristen Adams, a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at Loyola University Chicago, for the completion of her dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Eunju Yoon. We are interested in learning about the experiences of college students coming from a lower social class background and the impact that these various experiences have on their wellbeing. We are hoping to recruit approximately 200 participants to partake in this study and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of social class connectedness on subjective wellbeing and whether or not school belongingness and family cohesion influence this relationship.

Procedures: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete a series of short questionnaires assessing your experiences related to school, your family, social class, and your wellbeing.

Risks/Benefits: There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but you will be helping higher education and counseling professionals and their work with future students and clients.

Compensation: As a token of our appreciation, you will be able to enter a raffle to win 1 of 12 $25 gift cards. You can find directions to enter this raffle upon completion of the study. Should you choose to enter the raffle, your information (name and email) will be kept confidential.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Please do not indicate your name on the questionnaire. Information obtained as a result of this survey will be kept confidential. There is no way an individual participant can be identified in this study. All data will be kept in a password protected file or in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office for five years after completion of this study. Only the listed researchers will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are

free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate or not will have no effect on your current relationship with the researcher. If you complete an anonymous survey and then submit it to the researcher, the researcher will be unable to extract anonymous data from the database, should you wish for it to be withdrawn.

Contact and Questions: If you have questions about this research study, please contact Kristen Adams at kadams2@luc.edu. The supervising faculty member, Dr. Eunju Yoon can also be contacted at eyoon@luc.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Loyola's Office of Research Services at 773.508.2689.

Statement of Consent: By selecting "start" and completing the survey, you are agreeing to participate in the research. Your completion of the survey will indicate consent for informed participation. If you decide not to participate in this study, you may simply disregard this survey.

APPENDIX D:

STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Eligibility

1. Are you currently enrolled in a 4-year University or College?
2. Do you identify as coming from a lower class background (e.g. low-income, working-class, lower-middle-class)?
3. Are you currently between the ages of 18 and 25?

Demographics

1. Age
2. Gender
    a. Woman
    b. Man
    c. Transgender
3. Racial/ethnic identity
    a. White
    b. Black/African-American
    c. Asian/Pacific-Islander
    d. Hispanic/Latino/a
    e. Native-American/Alaskan-Native
    f. Multiracial (please specify)
    g. Other (please specify)
4. Which of the following *BEST* describes your primary social class of origin (i.e. while growing up)?
    a. Poverty/Poor
    b. Low-Income
    c. Working-Poor
    d. Lower-Class
    e. Working-Class
    f. Lower-Middle-Class
    g. Other (Please Specify)
5. What year in college are you?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior
    e. 5th year or higher
6. Do you currently belong to a TRiO/Student Support Services (SSS) Program?
    a. Yes
    b. No
7. Highest level of education your mother completed.
    a. Less than high school

        b. High school
        c. 2-year college
        d. 4-year college
        e. Graduate/Professional school
        f. Don't know/Unsure

8. Highest level of education your father completed.
        a. Less than high school
        b. High school
        c. 2-year college
        d. 4-year college
        e. Graduate/Professional school
        f. Don't know/Unsure

Study Questionnaire

For each of the following statements, choose the number below that best describes your experience.

1-strongly agree
2-disagree
3-slightly disagree
4-neither agree or disagree
5-slightly agree
6-agree
7-strongly agree

1. _____ I feel a sense of closeness with Middle Class Americans.

2. _____ I feel a sense of belonging to the U.S. Middle Class (lifestyle, culture, values).

3. _____ I feel accepted by Middle Class Americans.

4. _____ I feel like I fit into the U.S. Middle Class (lifestyle, culture, values).

5. _____ I feel connected with the U.S. Middle Class (lifestyle, culture, values).

For each of the following statements, choose the number below that best describes your experience.

1-strongly agree
2-disagree
3-slightly disagree
4-neither agree or disagree
5-slightly agree
6-agree
7-strongly agree

1. _____ I feel a sense of closeness with Lower or Working Class Americans.

2. _____ I feel a sense of belonging to the U.S. Lower or Working Class (lifestyle, culture, values).

3. _____ I feel accepted by Lower or Working Class Americans.

4. _____ I feel like I fit into the U.S. Lower or Working Class (lifestyle, culture, values).

5._____ I feel connected with the U.S. Lower or Working Class (lifestyle, culture, values).

For each of the following statements, choose the number below that best describes your experience at your current college/university.

1-completely false
2-false
3-neither false nor true
4-true
5-completely true

1. I feel a real part of [name of school].
2. People notice when I'm good at something.
3. It's hard for people like me to be accepted here.
4. Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.
5. Most professors at [name of school] are interested in me.
6. Sometimes I feel as if I don't belong here.
7. There's at least one professor or staff in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.
8. People at this school are friendly to me.
9. Professors here are not interested in people like me.
10. I am included in lots of activities at [name of school].
11. I am treated with as much respect as other students.
12. I feel very different from most other students here.
13. I can really be myself at this school.
14. The teachers here respect me.
15. People know I can do good work.
16. I wish I were in a different school.
17. I feel proud belonging to [name of school].
18. Other students like the way I am.

For each of the following statements, choose the number that best describes your family.

1= DOES NOT describe our family at all
2= BARELY describes our family
3= SOMEWHAT describes our family

4= <u>GENERALLY</u> describes our family
5= <u>VERY WELL</u> describes our family

1. Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other.
2. In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support.
3. We cannot talk to each other about the sadness we feel.
4. Individuals are accepted for what they are.
5. We avoid discussing our fears and concerns.
6. We can express feelings to each other.
7. There are lots of bad feelings in the family.
8. We feel accepted for what we are.
9. Making decisions is a problem for our family.
10. We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems.
11. We don't get along well together.
12. We confide in each other.

For each of the following statements, choose the number that best describes your experience.

1-strongly disagree
2-slightly disagree
3-disagree
4-neither agree nor disagree
5-slightly agree
6-agree
7-strongly agree

1. In most ways my life is perfect.
2. My life is excellent so far.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item then choose the number that indicates to what extend you feel this way in general. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1-very slightly or not at all
2-a little
3-moderately
4-quite a bit
5-extremely

1. Proud

2. Ashamed
3. Interested
4. Distressed
5. Excited
6. Upset
7. Strong
8. Guilty
9. Scared
10. Hostile
11. Enthusiastic
12. Irritable
13. Alert
14. Inspired
15. Nervous
16. Determined
17. Attentive
18. Jittery
19. Active
20. Afraid

Thank you for completing this survey! If you wish to enter the raffle in which you are eligible to win 1 of 12 $25 gift cards, please send an email to lucconnect@yahoo.com with the word "drawing" in the subject line.

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VITA

Kristen Adams was born and raised in Ridgefield, CT. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Art History from Syracuse University in 2008. She then went on to complete her Master of Arts and Master of Education degrees in Psychological Counseling at Teachers College, Columbia University in 2010. Since enrolling in Loyola University Chicago's Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Program in 2011, Kristen has been involved in research including scale development related to patriarchal beliefs, acculturation and enculturation, bullying, subjective wellbeing of urban youth, school persistence and dropout prevention, critical consciousness development, and the creation and dissemination of curricula related to socio-emotional skills, multicultural awareness, and racial/ethnic identity development and empowerment. Kristen's clinical practice during her doctoral studies has primarily consisted of therapeutic and diagnostic work in University Counseling Centers and PreK-8 schools. She completed her pre-doctoral psychology internship at Arizona State University's Counseling Services, and is completing her post-doctoral residency there as well. Upon completion, Kristen hopes to continue in clinical practice, while incorporating research, teaching, prevention, outreach, advocacy, and program development into her work.