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Author

Benedetti, Arianna Helene

Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

In Pursuit of the American Dream:
How Social Class Affects Future Possible Selves

by

Arianna H. Benedetti

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Psychology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Serena Chen, Chair

Professor Clayton Critcher

Professor Dacher Keltner

Spring 2019

Abstract

In Pursuit of the American Dream: How Social Class Affects Future Possible Selves

by

Arianna H. Benedetti

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Professor Serena Chen, Chair

In today's society, do people believe they can personally achieve the American Dream, no matter their social class upbringing? In seven studies, we examined this question using the novel framework of social class possible selves. More specifically, we examined how high-aiming individuals' social class possible selves are as a measure of future hoped-for, expected, and feared levels of education, occupational prestige, income, and subjective social class rank. We also examine how traditionally independent American cultural values will also be representative of future social class possible selves. Furthermore, we aimed to address how social class possible selves are shaped, examining family social class as an important predictor of social class possible selves and cultural values, as well as social mobility beliefs, system justification beliefs, collective social class self-esteem, and optimism as potential moderators. In addition, we addressed how much individuals believe in their social class possible selves by measuring perceptions of their efficaciousness and distance from the current self. Finally, we sought to establish the motivational power of social class possible selves on career attainment behaviors. We find social class possible selves represent distinct conceptualizations of social class in the future and are also represented by different levels of cultural values. Further, these possible selves all are predicted by family social class, though expected social class possible selves are the most strongly associated with class upbringing. In addition, expected selves are perceived as more likely to occur and closer to the present self. Family social class has differential effects on the efficacy and distance of these selves. Finally, we show that social class possible selves lead individuals to apply to opportunities that are in line with their expected levels of future income.

Keywords: possible selves, social class, social mobility, motivation

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my endless gratitude for my graduate advisor and committee chair, Serena Chen, for her guidance on this dissertation, in our other areas of research, and generally in succeeding in graduate school. Her support and mentorship have carried me from a wide-eyed first year graduate student to a thoughtful scientist, teacher, and writer. She has always encouraged me to grow as a researcher while taking into account my goals and my well-being, and I could not have asked for a better advisor in graduate school. I would also like to thank my other committee member and advisor, Clayton Critcher. He has taught me to be a fastidious researcher and writer, always taking into account the bigger picture of each research project while still paying attention to small details. In addition, I would like to thank my final committee member, Dacher Keltner, for providing thoughtful advice and ideas to advance this dissertation and my other areas of research. Furthermore, I would like to thank the wonderful graduate students in IPSR, SIR Lab, BSI Lab, and Clayton's lab for their friendship, support, and feedback throughout the last several years. I would also like to thank my family for all of their support. They provided me with the resources and housing to survive in graduate school and have always been willing to support and listen to my research even when it was far beyond their knowledge of psychology. Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful partner, Michael Farrington, for his unwavering love, support, and faith in my ability to succeed.

“[The] American dream [is] that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”

– Coining the definition of the American Dream,
James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*, 1931

Deep in the trenches of American history is the concept of the American Dream, in which individuals are said to be capable of achieving and attaining their “fullest statures,” regardless of their birth or position. Nearly 90 years after this idea was conceptualized, does it still exist in American society? Do individuals envision futures with more possibilities and opportunities than they have in the present? Do they believe these futures are attainable or likely? Moreover, are individuals’ perceptions of these futures significantly influenced by the lives they were born into or are currently living? In the current research, we aim to address these questions using a new conceptualization of one’s perception of oneself and one’s socioeconomic status in the future that we refer to as *social class possible selves*. More specifically, we examine if individuals have distinct and meaningful hoped-for, expected, and feared social class possible selves, if these selves are associated with different cultural values, and if these selves motivate behavior. In addition, we address how efficacious individuals believe they are in achieving these selves and how close to the present these selves feel. Throughout, our focus is on one’s family social class (i.e., the social class with which people grew up) as a driving influence on each social class possible self, unique and distinct from other relevant factors. Finally, we address the possible buffering effect of a belief in social mobility on how social class affects social class possible selves, and feelings of efficaciousness in achieving these selves.

Possible Selves

Though we propose a new conceptualization of possible selves focused on social class, we draw heavily from a large literature on possible selves theory, an established framework about individuals’ representations of their future selves (e.g., Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986). This framework delineates three types of possible selves: hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves. Hoped-for selves represent an individual’s future hopes, such as visiting holiday locations, winning the lottery, or publishing a novel. Expected selves embody what one expects to achieve in the future, such as completing college or getting married. Finally, feared selves refer to the selves in the future we hope to avoid, such as losing a job or being diagnosed with a terminal illness. Possible selves can be conceptualized across a variety of domains and not only represent future hopes, expectations, and fears in these domains, but also guide and motivate behavior. A short review of prior research on different domains of possible selves and the motivational value they have is presented before we introduce the concept of social class possible selves.

Possible Self Domains and Types

Individuals can have possible selves across a variety of domains, and these can change over the lifespan (Cross & Markus, 1991). Most extant research has assessed possible selves through open-ended measures, wherein participants are first given general definitions of what possible selves are, and then are asked to list their possible selves in an open-ended manner. Their responses are then categorized into particular domains, such as personal: “to be happy,” physical: “exercise more regularly,” family: “marrying the right person,” occupation: “to be a better nurse,” or abilities/education: “learn another language” (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

More recently, researchers have focused on possible selves in specific achievement-oriented domains such as academics and work. For example, academic possible selves (e.g., “graduating from high school”) have been shown to guide and promote school-related success behaviors in certain contexts (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004, Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2011; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). Pisarik and Shoffner (2009) examined how work possible selves (hoped-for and expected selves regarding work utilization, achievement, autonomy, personal development, and creativity) predict psychological well-being. Others have examined how stereotypically gendered hoped-for, expected, and feared work possible selves are between males and females (Chalk, Meara, Day, & Davis, 2005). Though many studies have looked at possible selves in achievement or work domains, both of which are relevant to social class, none have examined future social class as a whole, a concept we will come back to, and few have measured how high- versus low-aiming these possible selves are, examining them qualitatively rather than quantitatively in past research.

Possible Selves and Motivation

Possible selves are not just representations of the selves we hope to achieve or avoid in the future—they are also important guides and motivators of behavior (e.g., Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). For example, if an expected possible self of an undergraduate is to become a veterinarian, she is more likely to take classes on animal health and pursue veterinary internships compared to a student who does not have this particular expected self. Similarly, an individual whose feared self is being overweight may be more likely to engage in healthy eating and exercise than an individual who does not have this feared self.

Evidence for the motivational power of possible selves notwithstanding, research shows that possible selves may not be motivating across all contexts. Possible selves have greater motivational and behavior impact when they are associated with specific and plausible attainment strategies, when they are balanced (i.e., when one has expected selves and feared selves in the same domain that “balance” each other, such as expecting to graduate while also fearing failing out of school), and when the best versions of these selves are primed. Identity-based motivation theory (IBM; e.g., Oyserman, 2007, 2009, 2015), which is grounded in the assumption that individuals prefer to behave in ways that are congruent with their identities, is also relevant. According to IBM, possible selves can be motivating if they come to mind in relevant contexts (dynamically constructed), if they are interpreted as meaningful in the given context (action readiness), and if difficulties in pursuing the possible selves are perceived as meaning the selves are important to achieve, rather than impossible. We provide a more in-depth

discussion of each motivating context—as they relate to social class possible selves—in the Social Class Possible Selves as Motivators section.

Social Class Possible Selves

The present research aims to extend the possible selves literature by examining, in young adults, social class possible selves (heretofore referred to as SCPSs), broadly defined as representations of one’s social class in the future. More specifically, we examine three types of SCPSs: hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs. These possible selves encompass, respectively, people’s future hopes, expectations, and fears across educational, occupational, income, and social class rank attainment. We also examine how individuals would express these SCPSs through cultural values—capturing perceptions of future preferences, activities, habits, and behaviors. Though grounded in possible selves theory, this new concept of SCPSs also bridges and builds upon research on identity-based motivation, vocational aspirations and expectations, social class, and social mobility in several novel ways.

First, many studies have examined selves related to certain domains of social class, particularly academics or work, but none have specifically examined SCPSs or cultural values representing SCPSs. Additionally, as noted above, most studies have measured possible selves in an open-ended, qualitative manner or have focused specifically on attributes associated with these selves, such as efficacy, work values, or stereotypes (which overlap, to some extent, with cultural values we will examine). In the current project, we measure SCPSs in quantitative terms—that is, how high- or low-aiming individuals’ hoped-for, expected, and feared selves are. Further, we assess cultural values of SCPSs in quantitative terms, as a measure of how important certain traditionally American cultural values are to hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves. We also examine differences in SCPSs and SCPSs cultural values both within individuals and between them.

What is Social Class?

The American Psychological Association defines socioeconomic status (SES) as the “social standing or class of an individual, often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation” (APA, 2017). Social class overlaps almost entirely with this definition but is grounded in not just material differences in education, income, and occupation, but also in cultural symbols and signals of these materials. Individuals use these signals, such as visible indicators of wealth, education, or preferences, to display their class to others or discern others’ class. Ultimately, these objective class differences, as well as symbols, lead to an individual’s construal of his or her rank compared to others (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2011; Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012).

Wide-ranging research shows that social class is a meaningful differentiator of social, cognitive, and affective differences in individuals (for reviews, see Kraus et al., 2011, 2012). Summarily, lower- or working-class individuals tend to have an interdependent sense of self: being more communally oriented in choices and self-concept, making more contextual attributions (with a belief in less control and higher vigilance for threat), being more empathic and more attuned to others’ emotions, and being more socially engaged and prosocial. Conversely, middle- and upper-class individuals tend to have a more independent sense of self: being more individually oriented in choices and self-concept, making more dispositional

attributions (with a belief in more control and little concern for threat), being more attuned to the self rather than others' emotions, and being socially disengaged and more selfish (Kraus et al., 2011, 2012). Moreover, these differences in the interdependent and independent models of self are important not just as differentiators of social class differences but are also reflected by American cultural values and institutions. The independent model of self, focusing on individualism and control, and utilized more often by those of higher classes, tends to be promoted by American norms and institutions as the cultural ideal to achieve, while the interdependent model is less valued in American culture (Stephens, Fryberg, & Markus, 2012; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014).

Class membership is also associated with and can be accurately signaled and observed through more visible cultural values, which include culture-related preferences, activities, habits, and behaviors (e.g. Kraus, Park, & Tan, 2017), ranging from housing choices (Davis, 1956; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, & Su, 2005), clothing preferences (Gillath, Bahns, Ge, & Crandall, 2012), food choices (Monisaivis & Drewnowski, 2008), taste in music (Snibbe & Markus, 2005), leisure activities (Bellezza, Paharia, & Keinan, 2017; Veblen, 1899), health beliefs and priorities (Wardle & Steptoe, 2003), and patterns of speech and language (Labov, 1990, 2006). For example, this set of past research has shown that upper-class individuals often prefer rock music (Snibbe & Markus, 2005), eat higher-quality, lower energy density diets (Monisaivis & Drewnowski, 2008), exercise more and engage in more health-conscious behaviors (Wardle & Steptoe, 2003), and use less local and more standard speech patterns (Labov, 2006). On the other hand, lower-class individuals are more likely to prefer rock music, eat lower-quality diets, exercise less and engage in less health-conscious behaviors, and speak with non-standard dialects. These cultural values, broadly defined, are important differentiators of ways in which people perceive their own and others' social classes.

A growing literature also suggests social class may have more meaning to an individual insofar as he or she places importance on his or her social class group membership (i.e., working class, upper class, etc.) and how it may change over time (e.g., Aries & Seider, 2007; Destin, Rheinschmidt-Same, & Richeson, 2017; Thomas & Azmitia, 2014). In other words, social class can be conceptualized as a social or group identity, much as gender or race have long been considered. To date, the vast majority of research on social class has implicitly or explicitly considered social class to be an important aspect of one's current self; the present research proposes that social class can also be an important part of the future self.

Representations of Future Social Class

SCPSs are a novel way to measure the way individuals imagine their social class in the future, but several existing lines of research do speak to the broad idea that individuals think about their future social class. In particular, one way to address if people think about future social class is by looking to beliefs about social mobility. Americans tend to believe in social mobility, the ability to move up or down in class status, and also tend to overestimate social mobility in the U.S. (Kraus & Tan, 2015). Such findings suggest that not only do people see social class as malleable, they may be especially likely to imagine futures where their own social status has changed for the better. In this vein, Shane and Heckhausen (2013) found that college students tend to have an imagined personal expected SES that is higher than their family's SES.

Other research portrays SCPSs as an intersection of future identity, social class, and social mobility beliefs. In particular, Destin et al. (2017) put forth a conceptual model of SES as

a status-based identity, in which they address how individuals make meaning of their SES as an identity, especially over time and as a result of social mobility and a changing socioeconomic context. Within this framework, they argue that social class as status-based identity can be better understood from research on it as a future identity (Destin et al, 2017; Destin & Debrosse, 2017). Our construct of SCPSs fits into this future identity framework, as it captures individuals' hopes, expectations, and fears for his or her future status-based identity, as well as the ways in which people expect to culturally signal it. Our construct also differs in that we examine social class through the lens of hoped-for, expected, and future social class self that is associated with both more objective and cultural representations of social class.

Moving closer to the concept of possible selves, some research has examined possible selves in domains related to future social class, specifically education and occupation, as noted above. Moreover, research has shown that future educational and occupational possible selves may predict behavior or well-being. For example, Cross and Markus (1991) demonstrated that occupational hoped-for possible selves and occupational and ability/education feared possible selves were among the most common selves listed for young adults. Oyserman and colleagues have found that academic possible selves, paired with strategies to achieve them, were important predictors of academic success (e.g. Oyserman et al., 2002, 2006). Though fewer studies have focused on work or occupational possible selves, Pisarik and Shoffner (2009) demonstrated how five facets of hoped-for and expected work selves were positively associated with SES and were also predictive of psychological well-being. In another relevant study, Yowell (2002) examined the educational and occupational hoped-for, expected, and feared selves of ninth grade Latino students, finding that while hoped-for selves were the highest aiming, only feared selves predicted academic performance.

Aspects of SCPSs have also been examined in the literature on vocational behavior—typically in the form of future occupational expectations and aspirations, and both their predictors and outcomes. In this domain, studies have documented a relationship between family SES and prestige-coded aspirations and occupations among children and adolescents (a finding we will discuss further in the next section; e.g. Cook et al., 1996; Furlong & Cartmel, 1995; Howard et al., 2011; MacLeod, 2018; Rojewski, 2005; Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). Others have focused on outcomes, finding occupational aspirations are an important predictor of future career choice (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Few studies have examined more than the prestige of these occupational aspirations or expectations, though some have also coded for education and income (Howard et al., 2011). Importantly, most of these studies focused on adolescents and also indicate that adolescent aspirations stabilize and become more limited as they age (Blustein et al., 2002; Jacobs, Karen, & McClelland, 1991; Lapour & Heppner, 2009). Fewer studies have focused on young adults, though the exceptions have similarly found that family SES or perceptions of SES affected future occupational aspirations and expectations (Metz, Fouad, Ihle-Helledy, 2009) or future SES (Shane & Heckhausen, 2013). Outside of Shane and Heckhausen (2013), no studies have measured perceptions of future SES, and few have measured perceptions of future income or educational attainment. In addition, no studies in this literature have focused on future fears about occupation, income, or cultural values.

Overall, then, the concept of SCPSs builds on the above findings in the possible selves and vocational behavior literatures, while also addressing several gaps. SCPSs represent how individuals' perceptions of their future selves differ by educational, occupational, income, *and* social class rank and across their hopes, expectations, *and* fears. In other words, the proposed

concept of SCPSs encompasses more facets of social class than has been the case in prior work. In addition, SCPSs capture how high- or low-aiming future goals are, rather than focusing solely on their content. This framework also addresses the importance of their content by addressing the cultural values associated with SCPSs. This brings us to our first research question:

Research Question 1. Are SCPSs and their Cultural Values Meaningful and Distinct?

SCPSs as a construct fill a gap in the literature by addressing the overall future possible selves of young adults through a broad conceptualization of future social class as hoped-for, expected, and feared future education, occupational prestige, income, and social class rank and future social class as a cultural value. Within the possible selves framework, we aim to address if these hopes, expectations, and fears represent meaningful and distinct visions of future social class and cultural values that differ from one another and from current or family social class background or current cultural values.

H1a: SCPSs are conceptually distinct and distinguishable, such there will be mean-level differences among hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs. SCPSs will also differ from current and family social class background.

H1b: Cultural values for each future possible self are also distinct and distinguishable, such that there will be mean-level differences among how relevant traditionally American cultural values are to people's future hoped-for, expected, and feared PSs. Future cultural values will also differ from current cultural values.

SCPSs as Behavioral Motivators

Even if SCPSs are distinct and broadly-encompassing indications of perceived future social class, their importance is muted unless they serve a purpose. As noted, extant research supports the notion that possible selves have motivational power, suggesting that SCPSs should have motivational and behavioral implications. In this section, we detail several contexts in which possible selves, or relevant expectations and aspirations, motivate behavior in specific areas of the social class domain (primarily academic achievement and related behaviors) and how this could translate to the broader motivational power of SCPSs.

Having Possible Selves, Goals, or Aspirations

An important first step to motivating behavior and self-regulating is having a goal, or an expected, hoped-for, or feared possible self (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Oyserman, 2001). A goal, plan, or possible self cognitively guides an individual toward wanting and working to achieve it. For example, individuals with a goal are more likely to ignore goal-irrelevant information and focus on goal-relevant information (Gollwitzer, 1996). In addition, mental contrasting, a method of goal pursuit that involves comparing a future goal to the present reality, has been shown to increase academic and health pursuits (Oettingen, 2012). Vocational studies have additionally

shown that occupational aspirations and goals are an important predictor of future occupational attainment (Schoon & Parsons, 2002).

Possible Self Strategies

Across contexts, it is not uncommon for individuals to have possible selves that they may not attain. An important predictor of possible self motivation and attainment are the strategies an individual has to achieve that self. For example, several studies have demonstrated that when low-income or minority youths have strategies to attain academic possible selves, such as “going to class” or “not being lazy,” or take part in an intervention to generate these strategies, students tend to perform better and put more effort in school (Oyserman et al., 2002, 2004, 2006, 2011). In the goal attainment literature, implementation intentions, or specific strategies on when and where one will engage in goal attainment behaviors, have also been shown to have a positive effect on goal achievement. (Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006).

Best Possible Selves

Several lines of research have demonstrated that writing about one’s “best possible self” – defined as a thinking about a future in which everything has turned out in the best possible way – increases positive affect and optimism compared to other writing control conditions (Peters, Meevissen, & Hanssen, 2013; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). In addition, recent research indicates that thinking about future identities, albeit not best identities, can also be motivating. When low-SES college females wrote about their future identity after college (focusing on social-class-related factors: money, finances, and status) versus their identity prior to college with the same focus, they showed more expansive body posture and increased persistence on a GRE task (Destin, Manzo, & Townsend, 2018). In short, there is evidence that focusing on best or social class-oriented future selves is an important facet of the motivating power of possible selves.

Identity-Based Motivation

As described earlier, IBM argues individuals are likely to pursue goals and behaviors that are congruent with their identities. Identity-congruent possible selves are more likely to have motivational and behavioral influence under certain conditions—when they are contextually relevant, when they cue action, and when difficulties in pursuing them are interpreted as signaling the importance of the selves (Oyserman, 2009, 2015). Below we expand on each of these conditions.

Dynamic Construction – Is the possible self relevant? According to IBM, possible selves are more motivating when they are contextually relevant. For example, when children were given information suggesting earning and graduation success was gender congruent (i.e. more likely for one’s gender), they were more likely to have more academic goals and expect future success than when it was incongruent (i.e. less likely for or unrelated to their gender; Elmore & Oyserman, 2012). In this case, when gender was shown to be associated with academic attainment, it cued that the gender identity was relevant to achievement behaviors and was therefore motivating. A social-class example demonstrated that when low-income seventh

graders were given information suggesting college was affordable via financial aid versus information on how costly college was, the students expected higher grades and planned to spend more time on homework (Destin & Oyserman, 2009). Again, when made to feel like a particular identity was contextually relevant, the identity was a motivator for achievement behavior.

Action Readiness – Is the possible self meaningful? Another important predictor of whether a possible self will motivate and guide behavior is if it is meaningful in a given context such that it cues “action” (i.e., relevant behaviors). For example, students in most low-income schools will have high-aiming aspirations and expectations to graduate high school, but don’t engage in behaviors that will lead them to do so, and often many will not graduate (Cook et al., 1996; Mickelson, 1990). In these communities, while the aspirations to graduate exist, the contexts in which these adolescents live do not make them salient. Low-income adolescents may have fewer resources to help them find jobs or attain college degrees (Blustein et al., 2002), may have needs to immediately make money after high school to help their families (Blustein et al., 2002), and may be more exposed to media-derived identities that don’t require academic degrees (Roberts, 2000). As such, Destin and Oyserman (2010) demonstrated that middle school students invested more in school and got better grades when they had education-dependent (requiring they finish high school or college) versus independent (not requiring that they finish school) future selves. In this case, the education-dependent selves were meaningful, cuing behavior, while education-independent selves were not, therefore not cuing behavior.

Interpretation of Difficulty – Does attainment difficulty indicate importance? People sometimes encounter difficulties in attaining possible selves. When these difficulties are seen as indicating the importance of attaining the possible self in question, rather than signaling the impossibility of attaining the self, research on academic possible selves indicates that people are more likely to persist in pursuing these selves (Elmore, Oyserman, Smith, & Novin, 2016; Oyserman et al., 2006; Smith & Oyserman, 2015).

In sum, several lines of research indicate that possible selves can motivate behavior. We believe that SCPSs can motivate in the same ways, leading to our second research question:

Research Question 2. Do SCPSs Motivate and Drive Behavior?

SCPSs may be distinct but are they important drivers and motivators of future behavior? The literature reviewed above suggests that possible selves motivate when they are contextually relevant, meaningful, associated with strategies, and/or when their best versions are primed. These contexts should also extend to broader SCPSs. Our second research question aims to address if this is the case.

H2: SCPSs motivate and drive behavior that is both contextually relevant (i.e. consistent with one’s identity as a student at a prestigious university) and meaningful (involving the pursuit of social class related endeavors)?

Linking SCPSs to Social Class

The third question we aimed to examine pertains to how one’s social class relates to one’s future hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs. If one believes in the idea of the American Dream, it is possible that one’s SCPSs would not be affected by the social standing, or social class in

which they grew up. Unfortunately, while the American Dream is a prevalent idea in U.S. society, several lines of research suggest that attaining this “dream” may not always be likely. In addition to the ways in which social class is associated with meaningful psychological differences in individuals as discussed above, social class influences the ways in which people live their lives. Lower-class individuals have differential and reduced access to quality education, occupational opportunities, and health care than do their upper-class counterparts (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Fouad & Brown, 2000; Howell, Frese, & Sollie, 1984; Sirin, 2005). Moreover, people tend to spend their lives among people with similar educational and wealth attainment. People tend to marry, live in neighborhoods with, and work among people of similar social status (Argyle, 1994; Lareau, 2003; Sweeney & Cancian, 2004). This differential access to resources combined with the social influence of people of similar status may perpetuate class differences in terms of how they affect SCPSs: people may have hopes, expectations and fears in line with, and guided by, their current social class and the social class backgrounds of their families. Lower-class individuals are surrounded by similar people and have limited access to resources, and this may stunt their social-class-related hopes, expectations, and fears. Conversely, upper-class individuals tend to have more resources and are surrounded and influenced by others already holding higher status in society, perhaps leading them to hold hopes, expectations, and fears that match or go beyond their current standing. In addition, traditionally American cultural values that are associated with future SCPSs, such as valuations about home ownership and leisure time, are for the same reasons as above, likely to reflect social class differences. As such, these cultural values may be more associated with future lower-class membership when an individual is from a lower class, and similarly be more associated with future higher-class membership when an individual is from a higher class.

While no studies have examined how family social class relates to SCPSs or future SCPS cultural values, several studies support the notion that current and/or family social class shapes future aspirations, expectations, academic possible selves, and work possible selves.

The Link Between Social Class and Aspirations, Expectations, and Possible Selves

As stated earlier, a substantial literature has examined how social class, measured typically by parent education and/or income, affects academic and vocational aspirations and expectations of adolescents or young adults. Across a number of studies, a child or adolescent’s family SES has been shown to have a positive effect on educational and career aspirations. In other words, lower-SES adolescents often have lower-aiming educational and occupational expectations than do their higher-SES counterparts (Blustein et al., 2002; Cook et al., 1996; Furlong & Cartmel, 1995; Hannah & Kahn, 1989; Howard et al., 2011; Lapour & Heppner, 2009; MacLeod, 2018; Rojewski, 2005; Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Rojewski & Yang, 1997; Trusty, 2000). This effect is also perpetuated among college students and young adults (Aries & Seider, 2007; Brown et al., 1996; Metz et al., 2009; Pisarik & Shoffner, 2009). This is not to say that lower-SES individuals have altogether low-aiming goals or none at all, rather this relationship is nuanced in the form of a gap between aspirations and expectations among low-income and minority youth. While low-SES and minority youth often have higher-aiming aspirations to attend college or achieve lucrative and prestigious careers, their expectations tend to be lower-aiming (Cook et al., 1996; Hellenga, Aber, & Rhodes, 2002; Mickelson, 1990; Pisarik & Shoffner, 2009; Yowell, 2002), and their academic achievements and behaviors tend not to match

their aspirations (Alexander, Entwisle, & Bedinger, 1994, Hill & Torres, 2010; Mickelson, 1990; Pizzolato, 2006; Trusty, 2000).

Based on extant research, it stands to reason that because social class is an important predictor of academic and vocational aspirations and expectations, it should be a predictor of hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs, as well as cultural values of SCPSs. Social class should not necessarily predict hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs equally though. The aspiration-expectation gap indicates that social class should play a stronger role in predicting expected SCPSs than hoped-for SCPSs. Few studies address how social class might predict feared SCPS, though it stands to reason there would also be a positive relationship. Lower-class individuals have less status and income to lose and may also be used to living with fewer resources, while upper-class individuals, by virtue of having more, have more to lose and may have less experience living with fewer resources. This notion is supported by research by Griskevicius and colleagues that suggests those who grew up in low-SES families are more impulsive and less risk averse when faced with mortality or economic scarcity (Griskevicius et al., 2011; 2013). As such, given that upper-class individuals have more to lose, their fears may represent their risk aversion in losing status or income, and lower-class individuals' fears may represent less aversion. Considering this perspective, there may also be a positive relationship between social class and feared SCPSs.

Finally, when it comes to future representations of culturally-relevant values, it stands to reason that social class should also be a positive predictor. Firstly, insofar as future cultural values are related to one's future SCPSs, and one's future SCPSs are shaped by their present social class, it is likely that these values will also be shaped by one's present social class. Secondly, social class identities are associated with independent or interdependent models of the current self-concept, and therefore an individual is likely to already display certain cultural values, preferences, behaviors, and activities relevant to his or her current self. It is likely these values would change in the future, but still remain anchored on the current self and social class identity from which they grew.

It is also important to recognize that we have referred to both current social class and social class of the family an individual grew up in as just "social class." Social class has been measured in a variety of ways across the psychological literature. Social class is often measured by educational attainment (Snibbe & Markus, 2005), occupational prestige (Oakes & Rossi, 2003), wealth or income (Drenea, 2000), some combination of the above (e.g., Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009), and/or an individual's perception of social class rank vis-a-vis others (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000), though all of these measures tend to correlate highly (Kraus et al., 2012). Furthermore, depending on the population being researched, social class can often be measured by one's current class (e.g. Kraus et al., 2012) or that of the family they came from (e.g. Griskevicius et al., 2011, 2013). In this research, when we refer to social class, we are referring to *family social class* as encompassing both the objective (education, prestige, occupation) and subjective social class in which the individual grew up in. We use this operationalization for three reasons. First, we do not aim to distinguish between differing outcomes of objective versus subjective social class; rather we are interested in social class as a whole. Second, we are interested in future SCPSs of young adults, many of whom have likely not yet achieved financial independence from their families and for whom their "current" social class is the same as that which they grew up in. Third and finally, family social class, as a measure of education, occupational prestige, income, and subjective status of one's parents, is likely a more enduring and meaningful indicator of one's social class identity because it is the

one a person grew up with and the use of all four measures of class includes each aspect of what may make it salient to an individual in that household.

Social Class as a Unique and Distinct Predictor of SCPSs

Social class, while potentially a very important predictor of SCPSs, is of course not the only predictor. In this section, we consider several other psychological tendencies and/or preferences that may also affect one's future SCPSs, or that may moderate the effect of social class on SCPSs. These include social mobility beliefs, system legitimizing beliefs (or system justifying beliefs), collective social class self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism. Each of the following beliefs or tendencies has a documented relationship with social class or with perceptions of the future, and thus we believe it necessary to establish their relevance in predicting SCPSs. Addressing them will also better enable us to speak to social class as a unique and distinct predictor of SCPSs.

SCPSs, Social Mobility Beliefs, & System Legitimizing Beliefs. As previously discussed, the concept of SCPSs is closely related to the domain of social mobility beliefs. One's hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs are not just a measure of one's future social class, but another operationalization of one's beliefs in social mobility for the self. As such, one's beliefs in social mobility should be closely related to their SCPSs. Supporting this idea, higher social class has also been shown to be associated with increased perceptions of social mobility (Kraus & Tan, 2015) and increased perceptions of social mobility led to the perception that one will make more money in the future, and their kids will too (Shariff, Wiwad, & Akinin, 2016). Together, social class and social mobility beliefs should positively predict SCPSs. In addition, studies have shown that high social mobility beliefs can buffer against the negative effects of lower social class when it comes to well-being and academic persistence (Browman et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2017). It is not a far stretch, then, to presume that high social mobility beliefs could moderate the effect of social class on SCPSs. For example, a person of lower-class status who believes in social mobility may have higher-aiming SCPSs or believe their SCPSs are more achievable than a lower-class person who does not.

System Justification Theory is grounded in the assumption that "people are motivated to preserve the belief that existing social arrangements are fair, legitimate, justifiable, and necessary" (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003). Insofar as American society is represented by the ideology of the American Dream, system justification theory or system legitimizing myths are characterized by beliefs that the system is legitimate, permeable, and characterized by a Protestant Work Ethic, a perception that getting ahead comes from merit and hard work (Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). System justification beliefs have been linked to overall preferences for higher status groups, characterized by in-group favoritism and decreased ambivalence toward the group among high-status members, and in-group derogation, out-group favoritism, and increased ambivalence toward the group among low-status members (for a review, see Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). If individuals justify the system in which they live and believe that merit and hard work can lead to success, their SCPSs should mirror these beliefs. At least one study has supported this notion in conjunction with social class: Shane and Heckhausen (2013) found that subjective SES led to endorsement of meritocratic beliefs, which in turn increased goal engagement, and then led to higher expectations of future SES. In sum, both family social class and system justification beliefs are likely to have positive effects on SCPSs. It

also stands to reason that system justification beliefs may moderate the effect of social class on SCPSs, such that those who are lower class but motivated to endorse and justify the system may have higher-aiming SCPSs than their lower-class counterparts who do not share these system justification beliefs.

SCPSs, Collective Social Class Self-Esteem, and Social Class Identification. Another set of beliefs that may affect SCPSs or affect the relationship between family social class and SCPSs is Collective Social Class Self-Esteem. The Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) has four facets: membership self-esteem (how one feels about their group membership), public self-esteem (how the public perceives the group), private self-esteem (how the individual perceives the group), and importance to identity (how important the group is to one's identity). Based on extant research, we consider how the three self-esteem facets (membership, private, and public), as well as importance to identity, could affect SCPSs.

Both social identity theory (e.g., Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, de Vries, Wilke, 1998; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Tajfel, & Turner, 1979) and system justification theory (e.g. Jost et al., 2004) support the idea that individuals want to be members of higher-status groups when group membership is permeable – if possible, they will attempt to move from lower- to higher-status groups, will exhibit more in-group bias when they are a member of a high-status group, and will exhibit more outgroup bias toward high-status groups when they are not a member. Given this notion, social class should be positively linked to perceptions of membership, public, and private collective social class group self-esteem, as well as social class group identification. In this sense, the higher one's social class standing, the more they should take esteem in their group membership, the more they should identify with their group, and the more they should show interest in moving toward a higher status via higher aiming SCPSs.

It is also possible that importance to identity and collective social class self-esteem can alter the relationship between social class and SCPSs. From the perspective of IBM, importance to identity may moderate this relationship. IBM indicates that when particular identities are salient, relevant, and important, they can motivate (Oyserman, 2009; 2015). Presuming one's social class group membership is important to their identity, individuals may be motivated to have SCPSs in line with this identity. For example, a lower-class individual whose status is important to his identity may have lower-aiming selves than a lower-class person who does not think much about his social class identity.

Several studies also lend credence to the moderating role of collective social class self-esteem. When social class is low, it is more likely to be perceived as stigmatized identity, elicit concerns for stereotype threat, and be associated with sensitivity to class-based rejection. These concerns over one's class status have been associated with reduced belonging, self-regulatory depletion, poorer test performance, and poorer grades (Croizet & Claire, 1998; Johnson, Richeson, & Finkel, 2011; Rheinschmidt & Mendoza-Denton, 2014). This is not to say that individuals concerned with their class status are necessarily likely to have lower-aiming SCPSs than individuals who are not, but it is possible that these concerns lead individuals to fear not achieving higher-aiming SCPSs more, and thus their SCPSs may be lower-aiming. In sum, it is important to consider the potential role of collective social class self-esteem and social class importance to identity as unique predictors of SCPSs and as potential moderators of the social class and SCPS relationship.

SCPSs and Optimism. Finally, we consider the role optimism may play in affecting SCPSs. Optimism has been positively associated with social class and social mobility, such that higher-class individuals and those who have experienced social mobility are more likely to be optimistic (Boehm, Chen, Williams, Ryff, & Kubzansky, 2015; Heinonen et al., 2006). Furthermore, at least one study has examined the role of optimism on the formation of possible selves. Carver, Reynolds, and Scheier (1994) found that optimistic individuals listed more positive expected selves, but that optimism had no effect on hoped-for or feared selves. Overall, these strands of evidence suggest it may be worthwhile to consider the role of optimism in conjunction with the role of social class when exploring SCPSs.

In sum, collective social class self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism may also play a role in affecting SCPSs. Considering social class and these predictors leads us to our third research question:

Research Question 3. Does family social class predict each SCPS?

As noted, family social class has been associated with vocational aspirations and expectations, academic possible selves, and work possible selves. Such findings support the idea that family social class may be an important and unique predictor of expected, hoped-for, and feared SCPSs. The effect across these three SCPSs may be nuanced, given that other research suggests that family social class may have less of an effect on hoped-for SCPSs than expected SCPSs, and few studies have indicated the role it might play on feared SCPSs. We also measure beliefs about social mobility, system justification, collective social class self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism. These may all have individual effects on SCPSs, but we measure and test them alongside family social class as covariates or potential moderators of the family social class and SCPS relationship in an exploratory fashion. Among these, we only explore the moderating role of social mobility on the effect of family social class on SCPSs in an experimental and hypothesis-driven design.

H3a: Family social class is likely to be positively associated with all three SCPSs, but is likely to have the strongest association with expectations, both based on findings from prior research, and the general notion that expected SCPSs are likely to be based on individuals' perceptions of what is actually possible based on their standing in life.

H3b: Family social class is positively associated with future cultural values, such that the higher one's family SC, the more likely traditionally American, independent cultural values will be important to their future SCPSs. We do not have predictions about how family social class will differentially impact future hoped-for, expected, or feared cultural values.

H3c: Social mobility beliefs may moderate the positive impact family social class has on SCPSs. Specifically, among those with higher social mobility beliefs or those experimentally primed to believe they are in a socially mobile environment, family social class be less strongly linked to SCPSs.

Efficaciousness and Temporal Distance of Possible Selves

A final question this line of research seeks to address is if individuals feel achieving their SCPSs is possible. In this section, we will briefly discuss several lines of research that address this question specifically in terms of how capable individuals feel of achieving their hoped-for and expected selves and avoiding their feared selves, how likely these selves will come true, and how temporally distant these selves feel (i.e., do these selves feel more like tomorrow or do they feel far away?). In addition, we aimed to address if family social class not only predicts SCPSs, but also predicts how capable, likely, and distant these selves feel, and therefore discuss research that is relevant to these questions.

Capability of Achieving SCPSs & Likelihood of SCPSs

Many studies in the possible selves and vocational behavior literature have considered how efficacious individuals feel in achieving their possible selves or vocational aspirations and expectations. In the possible selves literature, this has often been measured by asking subjects how capable they feel in achieving their possible selves (or avoiding their feared selves) and how likely these selves are to come true (Cross & Markus, 1991). These feelings of efficacy matter. Cameron (1999) demonstrated a positive association between capability of achieving possible selves and life satisfaction, as well as a negative association between capability and depression. McElwee and Haugh (2010) developed a measure of clarity of thoughts in the future that was associated with increased psychological well-being, and a measure of frequency of thoughts in the future which was associated with reduced psychological well-being. They found that beliefs in capability of achieving possible selves and likelihood of the selves occurring was positively associated with clarity of future thoughts, and negatively associated with frequency of future thoughts, thus also potentially influencing well-being.

Not only do these perceptions of efficacy matter, they are likely to also be associated with one's social class background. For one, social class is associated with a lack of educational and occupational resources, and thus lower-class individuals may not feel they have the resources to achieve or attain their SCPSs. Vocational measures of efficacy, either framed from the perspective as one's ability to succeed in a variety of occupations or framed as being successful in one's occupation of choice, have been associated with one's social class while growing up across a number of studies (Ali, McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005; Hannah & Kahn, 1989; Lapour & Heppner, 2009; Metz et al., 2009; Thompson & Subich, 2006). In addition, it is likely that social class background may affect perceptions of SCPS efficacy through a sense of control. Extant research has demonstrated that those of lower-class status have a reduced sense of control compared to those with upper-class status (Kraus et al., 2009, 2012). In addition, a sense of control has been associated with believing possible selves are more probable (Markus & Nurius, 1986), more likely to occur (Robinson, Davis, & Meara, 2003), and that one is more capable of achieving them (Cross & Markus, 1991). Applying this to the social class domain, several studies have shown that having a higher internal sense of control was associated with higher expectations for occupational attainment, regardless of the prestige of the occupation (Brown et al., 1996, Klaczynski, 1991). Bringing these findings together, social class background is likely to influence how capable individuals feel in achieving their SCPSs and how likely they are to occur.

It is also worth noting that the extent to which SCPSs are high-aiming may also play a role in one's capability of achieving these SCPSs and the likelihood of them occurring. While we argue that social class is both a predictor of SCPSs and the efficacy of those SCPSs, the

relationship between SCPSs and efficacy is not necessarily directional. That is, individuals may select SCPSs that they feel they are more capable of achieving, or they may select SCPSs and then determine how likely they are based on how high-aiming the SCPS is. Consistent with the idea that efficacy may lead to particular SCPSs, Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, and Scabini (2008) found that the more individuals believed their possible selves would make them feel competent or capable, the more they wanted to become these selves in the future. Other studies have shown that perceptions of career-related efficacy predict occupational expectations and choice (Ali et al, 2005; Thompson & Subich, 2006). In other words, while we argue that social class affects both SCPSs and perceptions of their efficacy, we recognize there may be a bidirectional relationship between SCPSs and efficacy.

Temporal Distance of SCPSs

An additional way of examining if individuals perceive their possible selves as attainable is to assess how temporally distant their SCPSs feel. In other words, do these selves feel close to the present or far away? Studies have shown that when possible selves feel close to the present they are perceived more positively (Strahan & Wilson, 2006) and are more likely to motivate behavior relevant to achieving that self (Peetz, Wilson, & Strahan (2009). In addition, McElwee and Haugh (2010) found that the closer possible selves are, the more frequently one thinks about them and the more clarity one has about them. As such, temporal distance of SCPSs may be an important factor in differentiating hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs and also addressing if and when they will motivate.

In addition, we predicted that it is likely that social class background will play a role in how temporally distant possible selves feel. In line with this idea, one's class background may represent how much one needs to overcome to achieve a particular self. For example, imagine two students of the same age plan to become a doctor. One comes from a lower social-class background, attends a community college, and does not know any individuals in the medical field who could serve as a mentor to help them along their path. The other comes from a higher social-class background, is a student at a prestigious university, and her parents are both doctors, and thus have the knowledge and capital to help her along her path. The lower-class student, realistically, will likely take longer to achieve this goal due to school requirements and having fewer connections and resources, while the upper-class student may not. This may account for both an actual and subjective perception of temporal distance of SCPSs.

In sum, hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs should matter in terms of how capable individuals feel in achieving them, how likely they are, and how distant they feel. These feelings of efficacy and distance may also be affected by family social class. This leads us to our final research question:

Research Question 4. Do SCPSs Differ in How Achievable and Distant they Feel?

A final question we aim to address in this research is whether individuals perceive the efficacy of achieving SCPSs and the temporal distance of these possible selves differently across each self? Further, does family social class also predict the efficacy and temporal distance of these selves?

H4a: Because expected SCPSs are likely to be the most realistic and likely futures people imagine, we predict that expected SCPSs will feel the most likely, the most capable of achievement, and the closest because followed by hoped-for and feared SCPSs.

H4b: We predict that family social class is likely to positively predict how capable individuals feel in achieving them, how likely they are to occur, and how close they feel, but that in context of high social mobility, the impact of family social class may decrease.

Overview of the Present Research

We tested our four research questions across seven studies in the present research. Specifically, we aimed to address: 1a. Are SCPSs as measures of future social class distinct and meaningful, differing from one another within the individual and differing across individuals? 1b. Are future cultural values distinct and consistent with perceptions of future SCPSs? 2. Are SCPSs motivating, do they drive behavior? 3a. Does family social class predict SCPSs? What role do additional predictors, social mobility beliefs, system legitimizing beliefs, collective social-class self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism, play a role in shaping SCPSs? 3b. Does family social class predict alignment with future cultural values? 3c. Do social mobility beliefs buffer the effect of family social class on SCPSs? 4a. Do SCPSs differ in how capable individuals feel they are, how likely they are to occur, and how distant they feel? And 4b. Does family social class predict the efficaciousness and distance of these selves, and does social mobility reduce the effect of family social class on these measures?

Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c used a cross-sectional method to address Research Questions 1, 3, and 4 (H1a, H3a, H3c, H4a, & H4b) In these studies, we developed and used composite measures of current social class, family social class, and hoped-for, expected, and feared social class possible selves to compare their means and also test the predictive power of family social class on all three SCPSs. We also address the role of social mobility beliefs, system legitimizing beliefs, collective social class self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism as covariates and moderators of the relationship between family social class and SCPSs. Finally, we examined how capable individuals feel in achieving their SCPSs, how likely they are to occur, and how subjectively distant they feel. We compare across each hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPS, and also examine how family social class affects these feelings.

Study 2 use a correlational design to replicate the SCPS findings in Study 1, addressing Research Questions 1 and 3 (H1a & H3a) by examining the role of family social class in predicting SCPSs for student participants both in the general future and one year after student participants graduate from school. Study 2 also used a longitudinal follow-up design to address Research Question 2 (H2), SCPSs motivational attributes. We asked participants about their family social class and SCPSs in Wave 1 of the design, then followed up approximately four months later, at Wave 2, to determine how SCPSs influenced career and internship attainment behaviors.

In Study 3, we used an experimental design to test the causal moderation of social mobility on the relationship between family social class and SCPSs. In this study, we examined if believing that one attends a university that is beneficial for social mobility could decrease the positive impact family social class has on SCPSs and efficaciousness of SCPSs, testing H3c and H4c directly. In Studies 4 and 5, we made a conceptual shift toward examining how perceptions of future social class reflect not just expectations about changes in more objective measures of

social class (SCPSs: education, prestige, subjective socioeconomic status), but also expectations about future subscriptions to traditionally American cultural values. In Study 4, we used a cross-sectional design to examine cultural values, testing H1b and H2b. Specifically, we developed and used composite measures of future traditionally American cultural values for hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves, and examined how they were different from each other and current selves. We also used the same measures of family social class used previously to test the role family social class has on these values. In Study 5, we used an experimental design to manipulate perceptions of current income as a proxy for social class differences and examined the impact on future cultural values, aiming to replicate the correlational findings in Study 4 and address H1b and H2b.

Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c

Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c were correlational studies designed to test Research Questions 1, 3, and 4. Specifically, across these three studies, we had participants complete composite measures of family social class, current social class, and hoped-for, expected, and feared social-class possible selves. We addressed Research Question 1 (H1a) by examining the mean-level differences between current social class, family social class, and each SCPSs, with the aim of establishing that the three SCPSs are quantitatively different from each other and from current and family social class. We addressed Research Question 3 (H3a) by examining the predictive role of family social class in shaping hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs in a mixed-model design. We also examined social mobility beliefs (H3c; Studies 1b & 1c), system legitimizing beliefs (Studies 1a & 1b), collective social class self-esteem and importance to identity (Studies 1a & 1b), and optimism (Study 1a) in five separate mixed-model designs as potential moderators of the family social class and SCPS relationship. Finally, we measured how capable individuals felt in achieving each SCPS, how likely they were to come true, and how close they felt to the present. We examined each of these efficacy and temporal distance measures in mixed-model designs with family social class as a predictor, in order to examine how perceptions of efficaciousness and temporal distance differed across each SCPS (H4a), and also to examine how family social class was associated with these feelings (H4b). Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c were all conducted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk and had identical materials, except for the addition or removal of various measures. Due to the similarity in the population, methods, and data collected across these three studies, we analyzed the three studies together, referring only to each study's sample when a particular measure was not used in the other studies.

Method

Participants. Four hundred and forty-six participants were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in return for payments ranging from \$1.50 to \$1.60 ($n_{Study1a} = 139$, $n_{Study1b} = 153$, $n_{Study1c} = 154$). Twenty-nine participants were removed from the sample ($n_{1a} = 10$, $n_{1b} = 8$, $n_{1c} = 11$), due to failing one or more of up to three attention checks per study, such as "Please select strongly disagree," resulting in a final sample size of 417. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 30, $M = 25.60$, $SD = 3.27$; the age range was limited to ages 18-30 due to the nature of measures being studied: we were interested in perceptions of future possible selves from a younger group of people, which we expected might also differ significantly older in life. Participants were also required to be living in the U.S., given our interest in SCPSs specifically

within the U.S. social class system. The sample included 235 males, 179 females, and 3 other or declined to state. Additionally, it was 71% White, 11% Asian, 9% Latino/a, 6% African American, 1% Native American, 2% Mixed, and <1% Other.

Measures and Procedure. Participants completed the study on their own personal computers. The study was correlational in design. Participants first completed several demographic measures followed by an extensive set of questions about their individual and family SES and social class, possible selves, attainability of these selves, and several additional composites, described in full below. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables in Studies 1a-1c.

Social Class Measures.

Education. Participants were asked to describe the highest level of education they have attained, and that their parents attained when the participant was 18, anchored at 1 (*some high school*), 2 (*high school diploma or GED*), 3 (*some college*), 4 (*Associate's or technical degree*), 5 (*Bachelor's degree*), 6 (*some graduate school*), and 7 (*graduate or professional degree*). Means and standard deviations were: Individual: $M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.30$, Mother: $M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.61$, Father: $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.87$.

Occupation and Prestige. Participants were asked if they were employed. Then they were asked their current or most recent job title and their parents' job title when the participant was 18. For the jobs listed, participants were asked to rate how prestigious they were on a scale of 0 (*least prestigious*) to 100 (*most prestigious*). Means and standard deviations were Individual: $M = 39.16$, $SD = 25.24$, Mother: $M = 39.46$, $SD = 27.23$, Father: $M = 49.83$, $SD = 28.36$.

Income. Prior to answering income questions, participants were asked if they considered themselves financially independent from their parents (No: $n = 138$, Yes: $n = 279$). Participants were then asked for their *household income*, made up of total of their own and family income, and if they considered themselves independent from their parents, just their own income. They were also asked to provide their *family income*, consisting of their family's total income when the participant was 18. Income was on a scale of 1 (*less than \$10,000*) to 21 (*\$200,000 or more*), increasing by increments of \$10,000. Means and standard deviations were Household: $M = 5.98$, $SD = 3.99$, Family: $M = 8.10$, $SD = 5.01$.

Social Class and Subjective SES. Finally, participants were asked several measures of their SES and social class. They were asked to indicate their *current* and *family* (when they were 18) *subjective socioeconomic status* (SSS) on a 9-rung version of the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Socioeconomic Status, in which individuals rank their subjective SES on a ladder representing the SES hierarchy in the U.S. (Adler et al., 2000). The higher the rating, the higher the SSS a participant sees him or herself to be in. Means and standard deviations were Individual: $M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.69$, Family: $M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.75$. Participants were also asked to identify their *social class identity* (SC Identity) first by answering an open-ended question in which we asked, "We are all members of different social groups or social categories.... we would like you to think about your current social class, that is the class or group you belong to based on your education, occupation, and income levels. Please input the social class with which you

identify, if any.” Next, participants were asked to pick the social class group which most closely associated with their initial choice from the choices: 1 (*Lower class*), 2 (*Working class*), 3 (*Lower-middle class*), 4 (*Middle class*), 5 (*Upper-middle class*), and 6 (*Upper class*). Means and standard deviations were $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.16$. We provide means and correlations with the SC Identity measure but do not discuss it further as it correlated highly with family and current social class and, if substituted for family social class in each analysis, led to nearly identical results.

Participants were also asked if they had a spouse, and if so, were asked to provide education and occupation information for that spouse, but this data was not used in the analysis.

Family and Current Social Class Composites. The family social class measures were combined into a *family social class composite (Family SC)*. This composite consisted of the mean of standardized family prestige (made up of the mean of both parent’s occupational prestige; if only one parent was provided, then only that was used), standardized family income, and standardized family SSS ($\alpha = 0.82$). A current social class composite was also constructed by mean centering individual-level prestige, household income, and SSS on the parent prestige, family income, and family SSS measures, respectively, standardizing, and averaging them ($M = -0.40$, $SD = 0.79$, $\alpha = 0.71$)¹. The education measures were not included in the family or current social class composites because they did not correlate very highly with prestige, income, or social class rank (mean correlation with education: $r = .35$).

SCPSs. After answering the SES questions, participants were given a description of hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves based on Cross and Markus (1991). The description was as follows:

We'd now like to ask some questions about your future. Probably everyone thinks about the future to some extent. When doing so, we usually think about the kinds of experiences that are in store for us and the kinds of people that we might possibly become. Sometimes, we think about what we probably will be like, other times about what we are afraid we might turn out to be like, and other times about what we hope or wish we could be like.

One way of talking about this is to talk about possible selves – selves that we might possibly be. Some of these possible selves seem quite likely, for example, ‘becoming a parent’ or ‘vacationing in Florida.’ These would be expected possible selves.

Others may only be vague thoughts or dreams about the future, like ‘traveling in space’ or ‘winning the lottery.’ These would be hoped-for possible selves.

¹ As addressed in the introduction, current and family social class correlated highly (Studies 1a-1b: $r(417) = .59$, $p < .001$; the mean correlation across Studies 1, 3, and 4 was $r = .63$) and results in each study were similar if current social class was used as a predictor, rather than family social class. For simplicity, because we believe family social class is a more meaningful indicator of social class among young adults, and because we were unable to measure current social class in Study 2, we only use family social class, rather than current social class, as our social class variable of interest across Studies 1-4.

In addition, we may have possible selves that are feared or dreaded, such as ‘having cancer’ or ‘losing my job.’ These would be feared possible selves.

Some of us may have a large number of possible selves in mind, while others may only have a few.

The next few questions will ask about your hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves. Before moving forward, please consider how these may differ for you.

After reading this passage, participants indicated their hoped-for, expected, and feared social class possible selves by first reading the following statement, “We are now particularly interested in your hoped-for / expected / feared social class possible selves, which are possible selves specific to your hopes / expectations / fears for your educational attainment, occupation, and future income. Then, for each respective hoped-for, expected, and feared self, participants indicated their future education, occupation, prestige, income, and SSS using the same scales for each measure that were used when indicating current and parent social class².

Each social class hoped-for, expected, and feared possible self was then combined into a SCPS composite, termed *HPS*, *EPS*, and *FPS*, respectively. This was done by mean centering each prestige, income, and SSS possible self on the parent prestige, family income, and family SSS measures, standardizing, and averaging them. $M_{HPS} = 1.04$, $SD_{HPS} = 0.85$, $\alpha_{HPS} = 0.81$; $M_{EPS} = 0.24$, $SD_{EPS} = 0.90$, $\alpha_{EPS} = 0.88$; $M_{FPS} = -1.36$, $SD_{FPS} = 0.89$, $\alpha_{FPS} = 0.87$. Again, we did not use the education measures in the composites because they did not correlate highly with prestige, income, or SSS measures (mean correlation with education: $r = .29$) and because they were not included in the family and current SC measures.

Social Mobility Beliefs (Studies 1b & 1c). Participants completed a 4-item measure of social mobility beliefs about the self and of others (e.g. “Upward economic mobility is attainable for most people”; “Upward economic mobility is attainable for me”) using a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Two of these were averaged into a composite of beliefs about others’ social mobility – SM-Other ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.37$, $r(288) = 0.63$), and two were averaged into a composite of beliefs about one’s own social mobility – SM-Me ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.35$, $r(288) = 0.62$). The SM-Other and SM-Me beliefs correlated at $r(288) = 0.68$, therefore we combined these into a *Social Mobility Beliefs* (SMB) composite.

Beliefs in System Legitimacy (Studies 1a & 1b). Participants’ beliefs in three types of system legitimizing myths were assessed using modified social class versions of the beliefs in system legitimacy scale (Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). The scale consists of 12 questions making up three separate 4-item composites on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) of perceived social system legitimacy (e.g. “America is a just society where differences in status between social class groups reflect actual group differences”; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = 0.75$), perceived system permeability (e.g. “American is an open society where

² In Study 1a, participants were also asked to list up to 8 open-ended general hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves each. These will not be discussed further in the analysis.

individuals of any social class can achieve higher status.”; $M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.30$, $\alpha = 0.84$), and Protestant work ethic (e.g. “If people work hard they almost always get what they want.”; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.32$, $\alpha = 0.86$). These three composites all correlated at $r(274) = 0.70$ or higher, and together had an alpha of $\alpha = 0.90$, therefore we averaged the three measures into one composite of *Beliefs in System Legitimacy* (BSL).

Collective Self Esteem – Social Class (Studies 1a & 1b). A modified social class specific version of Luhtanen and Crocker’s (1992) Collective Self-Esteem scale, anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), was used to measure participants beliefs about their social class identity with measures of membership self-esteem (MSE; e.g. “I am a worthy member of my social class.”; $M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.18$, $\alpha = 0.79$), private collective self-esteem (PriSE; e.g. “Overall, I often feel that my social class is not worthwhile.”; $M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.37$, $\alpha = 0.85$), public collective self-esteem (PubSE; e.g. “Overall, my social class is considered good by others.”; $M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.37$, $\alpha = 0.87$) and importance to identity (Col-II; e.g. “Belonging to my social class is an important reflection of who I am.”; $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.37$, $\alpha = 0.83$). MSE, PriSE, and PubSE all correlated at $r(274) = .56$ or higher, therefore we combined these three into a Collective Self Esteem composite (Col-SE, $\alpha = 0.85$) and kept Col-II as a separate measure.

Optimism (Study 1a). Participants’ beliefs in optimism were measured via the Life Orientation Test – Revised (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994), which is a 10-item measure of optimism on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with six optimism/pessimism items and four filler items ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.91$, $\alpha = 0.91$). A sample item is “I’m always optimistic about my future.”

Efficacy and Temporal Distance of SCPSs.

Capability of Achieving SCPSs (Study 1a). We sought to determine how capable participants felt about achieving or avoiding each possible self. Adapted from Cross and Markus (1991) and Cameron (1999), for each education, occupation, and income possible self we asked participants how capable they felt of accomplishing each HPS, how capable they felt of attaining each EPS, and how capable they felt of preventing each FPS. Capable measures were on a scale of 1 (*completely incapable*) to 7 (*completely capable*). We then averaged each HPS, EPS, and FPS capability measures of occupation and income into 3 composites: *HPS-capable* ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.52$), *EPS-capable* ($M = 6.07$, $SD = 1.03$), and *FPS-capable* ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.51$). Education measures for capability, likelihood, and subjective temporal distance were not used in the composites because they were not used in the family SC or SCPS composites.

Likelihood of SCPSs (Study 1a). Similar to the capable measures, we also adapted from Cross and Markus (1991) a measure of how likely each education, occupation, and income HPS, EPS, and FPS will come true. These were measured on a scale of 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*) and the FPS measures were reverse coded. Similar to the capable measures, occupation and income HPS, EPS, and FPS were averaged into 3 composites: *HPS-likely* ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.65$), *EPS-likely* ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.11$), and *FPS-likely* ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.69$).

Subjective Temporal Distance of SCPSs (Study 1a). In the same way capable and likely possible self efficacy was measured, we also measured participants’ perceived temporal distance

of each HPS, EPS, and FPS. Adapted from Peetz, Wilson, and Strahan (2009), participants read a statement that said “Time can be experienced in different ways. Sometimes a point in the future will feel very far away, and other times an identical point in the future can be experienced as almost like tomorrow. Please rate the subjective distance of your hoped-for / expected / feared social class possible selves.” They then rated each education, occupation, and income HPS, EPS, and FPS on a scale of 1 (*feels like tomorrow*) to 7 (*feels far away*). FPS were not reverse-scored given that the ends of the scale did not have exactly opposite meanings. Similarly to the likely and capable measures, occupation and income HPS, EPS, and FPS were averaged into 3 composites: *HPS-distance* ($M = 5.83$, $SD = 1.26$), *EPS-distance* ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.72$), and *FPS-distance* ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.99$).

At the end of each respective study, participants were paid, thanked, and debriefed.

Results

All results across Studies 1-5 were analyzed using a mixed model analysis of variance (ANOVA), or analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) when the model contained covariates or moderators, with a random intercept for each subject. In all mixed models, degrees of freedom were estimated using Satterthwaite approximations (Keselman et al., 1999, Satterthwaite, 1941), adjusted means were reported, and pairwise contrasts for all means and slopes differing among factors with 3 or more levels were calculated using a Bonferroni correction (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995).

SCPSs. We first conducted an omnibus ANOVA to establish SCPSs as conceptually distinct, both from each other, and also from family SC and current SC. In order to do this, we conducted a mixed model ANOVA to compare the means of current SC, family SC, HPS, EPS, and FPS (Note that all means were centered on family SC). The ANOVA was significant, $F(4, 1655.40) = 784.49$, $p < .001$, reflecting significant differences between all pairwise contrasts in the model. HPS were the highest aiming ($M = 1.04$, $SE = 0.04$), followed by EPS ($M = 0.24$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – HPS: $t(1654.57) = -17.97$, $p < .001$), and then by FPS ($M = -1.36$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – FPS: $t(1654.57) = 35.99$, $p < .001$). HPS and EPS were also higher aiming than current SC ($M = -0.41$, $SE = 0.04$) and family SC ($M = 0$, $SE = 0.04$; HPS-current: $t(1656.60) = 32.25$, $p < .001$; EPS-current: $t(1656.60) = 14.40$, $p < .001$, HPS-family: $t(1654.57) = 23.33$, $p < .001$, EPS-family: $t(1654.57) = 5.36$, $p < .001$). Finally, FPS were also lower aiming than both current SC and family SC (FPS-current: $t(1656.60) = -21.35$, $p < .001$, FPS-family: $t(1654.57) = -30.63$, $p < .001$). All means and standard deviations for each SC and SCPS measure are also presented in Table 1. This analysis showed that SCPSs are meaningful. They represent three different levels of individuals’ future perceptions of their social class, which are different from each other, and are also different from individuals’ current and family social class standing.

SCPSs and Family Social Class. The relationship between family SC and SCPSs was analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the SCPSs were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 3-level within-subject possible self (HPS, EPS, FPS), continuous family SC, and the Possible Self \times Family SC interaction (See Figure 1). Importantly, the model revealed a significant main effect of family SC, $b = 0.41$, $SE = 0.03$, $F(1, 415) = 151.06$, $p < .001$, indicating that as family social class increases, HPS, EPS, and FPS become higher aiming. Additionally, there was also a significant main effect for possible self, $F(2, 830) =$

1371.99, $p < .001$, replicating the effects in the simple SCPS model, with each self significantly differing from all others. As noted above, HPS were the highest aiming ($M = 1.04$, $SE = 0.04$), followed by EPS ($M = 0.24$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – HPS: $t(830) = -17.13$, $p < .001$), and then by FPS ($M = -1.36$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – FPS: $t(830) = 34.31$, $p < .001$). These main effects were also modified by a marginal Possible Self \times Family SC interaction effect, $F(2, 830) = 2.33$, $p = .098$, driven by a steeper slope for EPS ($b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.05$) slightly differing from less steep slopes for HPS ($b = 0.36$, $SE = 0.05$, EPS – HPS: $t(830) = 2.09$, $p = .11$) and FPS ($b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.05$, EPS – FPS: $t(830) = 1.52$, $p = .39$). Because this was a weak omnibus interaction, the Bonferroni corrected p -values were not significant for the EPS-HPS and EPS-FPS slopes, though the slight differences in slopes indicated that while EPS correlated highly with family SC, HPS and FPS did so somewhat less.

SCPSs, Family Social Class, and Potential Moderators. In addition to testing the simple model accounting for the effect of Family SC on each SCPS, we ran five separate complex models with SMB, BSL, Col-SE, Col-II, and optimism as potential moderators. For each potential moderator, we used a mixed model ANCOVA in which the SCPSs were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 3-level within-subject possible self (HPS, EPS, FPS), continuous family SC, each moderator listed below, and all subsequent interactions between the three measures. We tested each model against the basic SCPS model and analyzed all new effects.

Social Mobility Beliefs. A likelihood ratio test indicated the model including SMB as well as the 2-way and 3-way interactions with SMB significantly better predicted SCPSs than did the simple model without SMB: $\chi^2(6) = 65.07$, $p < .001$. In this model, the main effects of possible self ($F(2, 568) = 1157.50$, $p < .001$) and family SC ($b = 0.41$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 284) = 118.57$, $p < .001$) remained consistent with the simple model. A new main effect additionally revealed a positive effect of SMB on SCPS: $b = 0.22$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 284) = 46.12$, $p < .001$. Importantly, the model also revealed a significant Possible Self \times SMB interaction: $F(2, 568) = 6.75$, $p = .001$ and a significant 3-way Possible Self \times Family SC \times SMB interaction: $F(2, 568) = 3.24$, $p = .04$. The Possible Self \times SMB interaction was driven by the SMB EPS slope ($b = 0.31$, $SE = 0.04$) and HPS slope ($b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.04$) being higher than the FPS slope ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – FPS: $t(568) = 3.64$, $p < .001$; HPS – FPS: $t(568) = 2.30$, $p = .07$). Though family SC positively predicted SCPSs across all possible selves and all levels of SMB, the 3-way interaction was driven by a difference in the slopes of family SC for EPS ($b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.07$) and FPS ($b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.07$) when SMB was low (-1 SD, EPS-FPS: $b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(568) = 2.86$, $p = .01$), but no difference between the family SC slopes for EPS ($b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.07$) and FPS ($b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.07$) when SMB was high (+1 SD, EPS-FPS: $b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(568) = -0.85$, $p = 1$). This model demonstrated that as family SC and SMB increased, each possible self was higher aiming. Further, when SMB was low, family SC was more positively associated with expected SCPSs than it was with feared SCPSs, but not when SMB was high. The interaction indicates a belief in social mobility changes the way family social class affects each possible self.

Beliefs in System Legitimacy. A likelihood ratio test indicated the model including BSL as well as the 2-way and 3-way interactions with BSL better predicted SCPSs than did the simple model without BSL: $\chi^2(6) = 28.47$, $p < .001$. In this model, the main effects of possible self ($F(2, 540) = 818.63$, $p < .001$) and family SC ($b = 0.34$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 270) = 74.46$, $p < .001$)

remained consistent with the simple model. The only new effect that emerged was an additional positive main effect of BSL on SCPS: $b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 270) = 21.40$, $p < .001$. The Possible Self \times Family SC interaction was no longer significant, nor were any other interactions: $F_s < 2.07$, $p_s > .13$. In this model, both family SC and BSL were positive predictors of SCPS, though the effect of family SC was almost twice the size of BSL.

Collective Social Class Self-Esteem (Col-SE: Membership SE, Private SE, & Public SE). A likelihood ratio test indicated the model including Col-SE as well as the 2-way and 3-way interactions with Col-SE better predicted SCPSs than did the simple model without Col-SE: $\chi^2(6) = 28.88$, $p < .001$. In this model, the main effects of possible self ($F(2, 540) = 782.50$, $p < .001$) and family SC ($b = 0.31$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 270) = 50.21$, $p < .001$) remained consistent with the simple model. A new effect that emerged was an additional positive main effect of Col-SE on SCPS: $b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 270) = 18.24$, $p < .001$. Additionally, a 3-way possible Self \times Family SC \times Col-SE interaction emerged: $F(2, 540) = 3.02$, $p = .05$. Though family SC positively predicted SCPSs across all possible selves, the interaction was driven by the slope of family SC for FPS when Col-SE was high (+1 SD; $b = 0.46$, $SE = 0.08$) being significantly higher than the slope of family SC for HPS when Col-SE was high (+1 SD; $b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(540) = -2.81$, $p = .005$), but this difference did not occur when Col-SE was low (-1 SD). Furthermore, when family SC was high (+1 SD), Col-SE positively predicted FPS ($b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(718.52) = 2.53$, $p = .01$), but when family SC was low (-1 SD), Col-SE had no effect on FPS ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(718.52) = -0.18$, $p = .86$). This model demonstrated that as family SC and social class Col-SE increased, each possible self was higher aiming. Further, when Col-SE was high, family SC was more closely linked to FPS than it was to HPS, but not when Col-SE was low. In addition, when family SC was high, Col-SE was a positive predictor of FPS, but when Family SC was low, Col-SE had no effect on FPS.

Social Class Importance to Identity (Col-II). A likelihood ratio test indicated the model including Col-II as well as the 2-way and 3-way interactions with Col-II did not better predict SCPSs than did the simple model without Col-II: $\chi^2(6) = 8.89$, $p = .18$. Nonetheless, we aimed to test any effect Col-II had on SCPS values. In this model, the main effects of possible self ($F(2, 540) = 803.05$, $p < .001$) and family SC ($b = 0.36$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 270) = 72.47$, $p < .001$) remained consistent with the simple model. A new effect that emerged was an additional positive main effect of Col-II on SCPS: $b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 270) = 7.13$, $p = .008$. The Possible Self \times Family SC interaction effect in the simple model remained marginally significant: $F(2, 540) = 2.83$, $p = .06$, and was consistent with the simple model such that family SC was a slightly stronger predictor of EPS ($b = 0.43$, $SE = 0.06$) than of HPS ($b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(540) = 2.36$, $p = .06$). No other effects emerged: $F_s < 1$, $p_s > .50$. In this model, both family SC and Col-II were positive predictors of SCPS, though the effect of family SC was almost three times the size of Col-II.

Optimism. A likelihood ratio test indicated the model including optimism as well as the 2-way and 3-way interactions with optimism only marginally better predicted SCPSs than did the simple model without optimism: $\chi^2(6) = 11.23$, $p = .08$. Nonetheless, we aimed to test any effect optimism had on SCPS values. In this model, the main effects of possible self ($F(2, 250) = 283.86$, $p < .001$) and family SC ($b = 0.30$, $SE = 0.06$, $F(1, 125) = 22.31$, $p < .001$) remained consistent with the simple model. A new effect that emerged was an additional positive main

effect of optimism on SCPS: $b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, $F(1, 125) = 6.56$, $p = .01$. No interaction effects emerged: $F_s < 1.7$, $p_s > .19$. This model indicated that both family SC and optimism were positive predictors of SCPS, but the effect of family SC was almost twice as large.

Efficacy and Temporal Distance of SCPSs. HPS-, EPS-, and FPS- capable, likely, and time were analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the capable, likely, and time measures were the respective dependent variables, and the independent variables were 3-level within-subject possible self (HPS, EPS, FPS), continuous Family SC, and the Possible Self \times Family SC interaction.

Capability of Achieving SCPSs. The model revealed a main effect of possible self: $F(2, 254) = 34.78$, $p < .001$, in which individuals felt more capable of achieving their EPS ($M = 6.07$, $SE = 0.12$) than avoiding their FPS ($M = 5.58$, $SE = 0.12$, EPS-FPS: $t(254) = 3.64$, $p = .001$), and also more capable of avoiding their FPS than achieving their HPS ($M = 4.97$, $SE = 0.12$, HPS-FPS: $t(254) = -4.67$, $p < .001$). There was also a marginal main effect for family SC: $b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.11$, $F(1, 127) = 3.51$, $p = .06$, in which individuals felt more capable of achieving each self as their family SC increased. There was no interaction for Possible self \times Family SC: $F(2, 254) = 0.18$, $p = .84$ (see Figure 2).

Likelihood of SCPSs. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for possible self: $F(2, 254) = 29.77$, $p < .001$ in which individuals felt their EPS was more likely to come true ($M = 5.68$, $SE = 0.13$) than their FPS was not to come true ($M = 4.88$, $SE = 0.13$, EPS-FPS: $t(254) = 5.04$, $p < .001$), and also that their FPS was more likely not to come true than their HPS was to come true ($M = 4.48$, $SE = 0.13$, HPS-FPS: $t(254) = -2.53$, $p = .04$). There was also a marginal main effect for family SC: $b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.11$, $F(1, 127) = 3.08$, $p = .08$ indicating that as family SC increased, individuals felt it was more likely that their respective selves would come true (or would not come true for FPS). There was no interaction for Possible Self \times Family SC: $F(2, 254) = 0.09$, $p = .41$ (see Figure 3).

Subjective Temporal Distance of Possible Selves. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for possible self: $F(2, 254) = 44.66$, $p < .001$, where individuals believed their HPS ($M = 5.82$, $SE = 0.15$) felt more far away than their EPS ($M = 4.17$, $SE = 0.15$; EPS-HPS: $t(254) = 7.95$, $p < .001$) and FPS ($M = 4.08$, $SE = 0.15$; HPS-FPS: $t(254) = 8.39$, $p < .001$). There was no main effect for family SC: $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.10$, $F(1, 127) = 0.05$, $p = .82$. Importantly, there was a Possible Self \times Family SC interaction modifying these effects: $F(2, 254) = 5.56$, $p = .004$, in which the slope for family SC for FPS was significant and positive ($b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(381) = 2.57$, $p = .01$) and it differed from the slope for family SC for HPS which was negative, but marginally significant. ($b = -0.31$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(381) = -1.77$, $p = .078$; HPS-FPS: $t(254) = -3.07$, $p = .007$). The slope of family SC for FPS also differed from the slope for EPS ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(381) = -1.20$, $p = .23$) which had no effect on perceptions of distance (EPS-FPS: $t(254) = -2.67$, $p = .03$). In sum, individuals believed their HPS were further away than their EPS

and FPS, and while family SC did not affect how far away EPS felt, as family SC increased, individuals did feel that their HPS were closer and their FPS were further (see Figure 4).

Discussion

SCPSs are an important measure of individuals' perceptions of their future social class selves. Results showed that HPSs are higher aiming than EPSs, both HPSs and EPSs are higher aiming than FPSs, and that all three are different from current and family social class, supporting H1a. Next, we found that family social class is an important predictor of all three SCPSs, particularly EPSs (though this was marginally significant), supporting H2a. Family social class is also a strong and unique predictor of SCPSs, as demonstrated by controlling for other important beliefs and perceptions of the world including social mobility beliefs, beliefs in system legitimacy, social class collective self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism. All of these measures also had positive effects on SCPSs, but none were as strong as family social class. Among these variables, social mobility beliefs also changed the effect family social class had on EPSs and FPSs, but it did not fully reduce the effect family social class had on all SCPSs, thus not supporting H3c.

In addition, and in support of H4a, individuals felt that they were most capable of achieving their EPSs, EPSs were most likely to come true, and EPSs, as well as FPSs, felt closest to the present self. This was followed by individuals believing that they were capable of avoiding their FPSs and that their FPSs were less likely to come true. Individuals were the most unsure about their HPSs, they felt they were the least capable of achieving them, that they were the least likely to come true, and that they felt the farthest away. Finally, in support of H4b, the higher one's family social class, the more capable people felt in achieving their SCPSs and the more likely they were to come true (though these were marginal effects). Higher family social class also led to the perception that individuals' HPSs were closer and FPSs were further but did not affect perceptions of EPS distance.

Study 2

Study 2 used a correlational design to replicate Study 1 findings addressing Research Questions 1 and 3 (H1a and H3a) and used a longitudinal design to address Research Question 2 (H2). Specifically, we recruited undergraduate students at the beginning of the semester in Wave 1 and assessed their family SC and hoped-for and expected SCPSs. We then followed up with the participants four months later, in Wave 2, to assess the effect of SCPSs on their career attainment behaviors. To do so, we asked participants what jobs, internships, graduate school programs, and other opportunities they had applied to that would start within the next year. We then asked how much effort they put into each application, how much they wanted each position, the prestige of each position, the wages they could earn in each position, and where they stood in the recruitment process for each position. We used measures of family SC, hoped-for SCPSs, and expected SCPS to address whether social class background or perceptions of future social class were predictors of these career attainment behaviors.

Method

Participants. Participants were recruited in two waves from UC Berkeley to participate in this study for psychology course credit. In the first wave, 494 participants were recruited in the

beginning of the semester, and 10 were removed due to failing built in attention checks, resulting in a final Wave 1 sample of $N = 484$. In the second wave, participants that consented to being contacted in Wave 1 were invited to take a follow up survey at the end of the semester for course credit and to be entered into a \$25 raffle. 145 participants took part in the second wave; 41 were removed due to reporting no applications (see procedure below) and 9 were removed for not providing enough information to match to Wave 1, resulting in a final Wave 2 sample of $N = 95$. The full sample (Wave 1) ranged in age from 18 to 58, $M = 21.39$, $SD = 3.55$, and included 127 males, 350 females, and 7 other or declined to state. Additionally, Wave 1 was 33% White, 49% Asian, 10% Latino/a, 2% African American, <1% Native American, and 3% Other. The Wave 2 (a subset of Wave 1) sample ranged in age from 18 to 47, $M = 21.55$, $SD = 3.85$, and included 25 males, 69 females, and 1 other. Additionally, Wave 2 was 37% White, 47% Asian, 7% Latino/a, 6% African American, <1% Native American, and <1% Other.

Measures & Procedure. Participants completed the study on their own personal computers. The study was correlational and cross-sectional in design for Wave 1, and a longitudinal follow up for Wave 2. In Wave 1, participants first completed several demographic measures followed by the current and parent social class measures used in Study 1 (See Table 2 for descriptive statistics and correlations for all measures in Study 2).³ After, they also completed the same hoped-for and expected SCPS measures used in Study 1, but each education, prestige, income, and SSS possible self had two parts such that there was one question about the general future and one about one-year post-graduation. In this study, we did not include feared SCPSs due to constraints on the question limits through the psychology department. All family social class and SCPS measures were made into composites as in Study 1. (Family SC: $\alpha = 0.84$, HPS-general: $M = 0.78$, $SD = 0.79$, $\alpha = 0.71$; EPS-general: $M = 0.35$, $SD = 0.85$, $\alpha = 0.81$; HPS-post-grad: $M = -0.41$, $SD = 0.80$, $\alpha = 0.71$; EPS-post-grad: $M = -0.73$, $SD = 0.83$, $\alpha = 0.78$).

In Wave 2, we first asked participants their *graduation year* and if they had applied to any of the following positions in that school year: full-time jobs to start post-graduation (termed *jobs*), paid or unpaid summer internships (termed *internships*), graduate or professional school (termed *grad school*), another opportunity, position, or program (paid or unpaid) that furthered their future goals (termed *other*), or none of the above (termed *none*). For those that answered none ($n = 41$), we asked about their plans for the upcoming summer and post-graduation, and removed them from the analysis. Those that listed any job, internship, grad school, or other application were asked to describe what they applied to (121 jobs, 107 internships, 38 grad school, 74 other, 3.59 applications per participant), how much *effort* they put into each application ($M_{adjusted} = 4.78$, $SE = 0.13$), and how much they *wanted* each position ($M_{adjusted} = 5.47$, $SE = 0.11$). Both were on 7-point scales of 1 (*very little effort/did not want*) to 7 (*a great deal of effort/wanted very much*). They then rated how *prestigious* they believed each position was ($M_{adjusted} = 68.39$, $SE = 2.00$) on a continuous scale of 0 (*not very prestigious*) to 100 (*very prestigious*) and indicated their expected hourly *wage* ($M_{adjusted} = \$20.30$, $SE = 1.86$) for each on a continuous scale of \$0 to \$100 per hour (they did not rate wages for grad school applications).

³ In Study 2, participants did not answer questions about current individual prestige. Participants also provided household income on a scale of 1 (*less than \$15,000K*) to 8 (*more than \$150,000K*), rather than the 21-point scale used in Studies 1a-1c. As such, we were unable to create a current social class composite similar to that in Studies 1a-1c and focus only on family social class.

Finally, for each application, participants were asked the status of their application, indicating if, at that point in time, they had withdrawn their application ($n = 19$), were waiting to hear back ($n = 152$), were currently interviewing ($n = 21$), had been rejected ($n = 75$), or had received an offer ($n = 73$). Finally, participants were allotted credit, entered into the raffle if they wished to, thanked, and debriefed.

Results

SCPSs and Family Social Class. SCPSs were analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the SCPSs were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 4-level within-subject possible self (HPS-general, EPS-general, HPS-post-grad, EPS-post-grad), continuous family SC, and the Possible Self \times Family SC interaction (See Figure 5). Importantly, the analysis replicated the main effect of family SC from Studies 1a-1c, in which all possible selves became higher aiming as family SC increased ($b = 0.29$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1,459.29) = 71.75$, $p < .001$). The analysis also revealed a main effect of possible self: $F(3,1331.59) = 796.68$, $p < .001$. Using pre-planned contrasts, this effect replicated the possible self effect in Studies 1a-1c such that individuals had higher aiming HPS-general ($M = 0.78$, $SE = 0.04$) than EPS-general ($M = 0.35$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(1330.13) = 12.65$, $p < .001$) and extended it to post-grad, such that individuals also had higher aiming HPS-post-grad ($M = -0.40$, $SE = 0.04$) than EPS-post-grad ($M = -0.72$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(1330.94) = 9.41$, $p < .001$). Additionally, contrasts were also coded to compare the average of HPS- and EPS- general to the average of HPS- and EPS-post-grad, also yielding a significant effect in which general possible selves were higher aiming than post-grad possible selves, $t(1333.69) = 46.28$, $p < .001$.

Finally, there was also a marginal Possible Self \times Family SC interaction $F(3,1335.11) = 2.22$, $p = .08$, in which the average family SC slopes for PS-general (HPS-general: $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS-general: $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.04$) were steeper than the average slopes for PS-post-grad (HPS-post-grad: $b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS-post-grad: $b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.04$; $t(1339.90) = 2.47$, $p = .01$). HPS and EPS family SC slopes did not differ within general or post-grad possible selves: $ts < 0.73$, $ps > .46$. In sum, though EPS and HPS slopes did not differ, post-grad SCPSs were less susceptible to the effect of family SC than were general SCPSs. Additionally, HPS SCPSs at both time points were higher aiming than their respective EPS SCPSs but given that post-grad SCPSs represented a sooner point in student's lives than their more general future SCPSs, the post-grad SCPSs were lower aiming than general SCPSs.

Effects were also consistent when SCPSs were analyzed as a mixed model ANCOVA in which the independent variables were 2-level possible self (HPS/EPS), 2-level possible self (PS) time period (post-grad/general), and continuous family SC, as well as all the interactions among them. In this model, the main effect for family SC remained the same as above. There was a significant main effect of possible self: $F(1,1331.64) = 242.77$, $p < .001$ and of PS time period: $F(1,1331.69) = 2137.92$, $p < .001$, reflecting the means presented above, in which HPSs were higher aiming than EPSs, and general were higher than post-grad. A significant interaction effect for PS Time Period \times Family SC: $F(1,1339.90) = 6.10$, $p = .01$ reflected the slopes presented above, in which general PS had a steeper family SC slope than post-grad PS. Finally, this model also revealed a significant interaction effect for Possible Self \times PS Time Period: $F(1,1329.43) = 4.89$, $p = .03$, in which all pairwise means among each PS and time period differed, and the difference between HPS- and EPS-general ($M_{HPS} - M_{EPS} = 0.43$, $SE = 0.03$) was greater than the difference between HPS- and EPS-post-grad ($M_{HPS} - M_{EPS} = 0.32$, $SE = 0.03$). This effect may be

a result of post-graduate SCPSs being more restricted by the time frame, such that expectations and hopes do not differ as much as they do in the general future. No other effects emerged: $F_s < 1$, $p_s > .5$.

Effort, Wanting, Application Prestige, & Application Wages. In line with our hypotheses that SCPS are predictive of behavior associated with attaining these SCPSs, we examined if post-grad SCPSs were a predictor of application effort, wanting, prestige, or wages, and if they predicted the number or types of applications an individual applied to. We used post-grad SCPSs as they were likely to be more relevant for application behavior. First, to examine if SCPSs predicted the number or type of applications individuals applied to, we tested several models with the following DVs: total applications submitted, total jobs applications, total internship applications, total grad school applications, and total other applications, as well as models with percentage of total jobs, internships, grad school, and other applications. In each respective model, we regressed each DV on a standardized composite of the HPS-post-grad and EPS-post-grad measures, and controlled for standardized measures of family SC and graduation year (for all analyses, the results were consistent for either HPS or EPS, therefore we chose to report a measure using an average composite of both). The HPS-EPS composite was a positive predictor of total applications ($b = 0.84$, $SE = 0.29$, $t(88) = 2.93$, $p = .004$). In addition, HPS-EPS positively predicted total jobs applied to ($b = 0.73$, $SE = 0.21$, $t(88) = 3.50$, $p < .001$), as well as the percentage of total jobs applied to ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(88) = 3.74$, $p = .003$). HPS-EPS also negatively predicted total other applications applied to ($b = -0.41$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(88) = -3.83$, $p < .001$), as well as the percentage of other applications applied to ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(88) = -5.16$, $p < .001$). There were no effects on internship or grad school applications. In sum, higher-aiming HPS and EPS post-graduation led individuals to not only apply to more applications altogether, but specifically apply to more jobs and fewer “other” opportunities.

To test if SCPSs were a predictor of effort, wanting, prestige, or income of these applications, we used a mixed model with each one as a DV, and regressed on them the same HPS-EPS-post-grad composite, controlling for standardized measures of family SC, graduation year, and total applications. We also included a random intercept for type of application and for subject. The models revealed no effect of the HPS-EPS composite for effort, wanting, or prestige. However, the model did reveal that HPS-EPS positively predicted wages of applications ($b = 0.39$, $SE = 1.49$, $t(83.98) = 2.63$, $p = .01$), indicating that higher-aiming HPS and EPS led to applying to positions with higher wages.

Discussion

Study 2 demonstrated that SCPSs are an important predictor of social class attainment behavior. In support of H2, not only did higher post-grad HPSs and EPSs predict more overall applications, controlling for graduation year and family social class, it predicted more jobs, and fewer other types of applications, applied to. Additionally, while SCPSs did not predict any differences in how much effort participants put into an application, how much they wanted the position, or how prestigious they believed the positions were, higher-aiming HPSs and EPSs led individuals to apply to positions with higher wages. Furthermore, Study 2 replicated and extended the possible self and family social class findings from Study 1 (H1a & H2a), in which HPSs were consistently higher aiming than EPSs (for both general and post-grad), and family social class positively predicted all future SCPSs, though the effect was weaker for post-grad

SCPSs than general SCPSs. Unlike Study 1, there was no difference in the effect of family social class on future hoped-for SCPSs or expected SCPSs, a result we will discuss further in the General Discussion.

Study 3

Study 3 was an experimental study designed to test H3c: the potential moderating role of social mobility. In Study 1, we tested social mobility beliefs as a moderator of the effect family social class has on SCPSs and demonstrated that these beliefs do change the effect family social class has on each possible self, though it did not fully support H3a. We aimed to further understand the moderating role of social mobility in Study 3 by using a social mobility manipulation to test if the effect of family social class on SCPSs, efficaciousness of SCPSs, and temporal distance of SCPSs (as shown in Studies 1a-1c) decreases in the context of high versus low social mobility. Specifically, in Study 3, we had undergraduate participants from UC Berkeley complete composite measures of family social class, then read an article that indicated UC Berkeley is a driver in students' future upward mobility (high mobility), or that attendance at UC Berkeley stagnates students' future mobility (low mobility). After, they completed composite measures of future SCPSs, then rated these SCPSs in terms of their capability of achieving them, likelihood that they will come true, and how far away they feel. In a mixed-model design, we then aimed to again address H1a by showing via mean-level differences that SCPSs remain conceptually distinct from one another even in the context of social mobility. Further, we directly tested H3c by examining how the predictive role of family social class changes in the context of high or low mobility in shaping hoped-for, expected, and feared SCPSs. Finally, we extended the evidence addressing H4b by testing how the role of family social class changes in the context of high or low mobility in predicting efficaciousness and temporal distance of SCPSs.

Method

Participants. UC Berkeley undergraduates participated in this study for psychology course credit. Three hundred ninety-seven participants completed the study and 5 participants were removed from the sample due to failing an attention check, such as “Please select strongly disagree,” or indicating they knew the manipulation involved deception, resulting in a final sample size of 392. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 34, $M = 20.44$, $SD = 1.89$ and the sample included 109 males, 280 females, and 3 other or declined to state. Additionally, it was 24% White, 56% Asian, 8% Latino/a, 1% African American, 7% Mixed, and 3% Other.

Measures & Procedure. Participants completed the study on their own personal computers. The study was experimental in design and it began with participants completing the same demographic measures as in Studies 1 and 2, followed by the current and parent SES measures used in Studies 1 and 2. The parent SES measures were again computed into a Family SC composite ($\alpha = .84$).

The study then moved to the social mobility manipulation. Participants were told this part of the study involved assessing student preferences for reading articles about research conducted at UC Berkeley. They were asked several filler measures about reading news and research articles. They were then told they would be shown two randomized sample articles about research conducted at the university and would answer several follow up questions about these

articles. In reality, the articles were not randomized. The first was a filler article about physics research, and the second was the article designed to manipulate beliefs about social mobility. Participants reading this article were randomly assigned to see an article depicting UC Berkeley as a university that either leads to social mobility for its students (*high mobility*) or an article depicting that the university stunts social mobility for its students (*low mobility*). Both articles presented much of the same general information about social mobility research conducted at UC Berkeley and were heavily based on a real article published by *Berkeley News* (Maclay, 2017). In the high mobility condition, the article was titled “Berkeley among top universities for upward mobility” and included information about high social mobility at UC Berkeley, such as “UC Berkeley is the No. 1 college in the nation in terms of the number of students who come from families in the bottom fifth and end up having earnings in the top 1 percent.” This article involved no deception and included only true statistics about social mobility at Berkeley. In the low mobility condition, it was titled “Berkeley stagnating in upward mobility” and included information about slowing social mobility at UC Berkeley, such as “Since 2000, the fraction of students from low-income families at the Ivy-plus colleges barely increased, while access at some institutions such as UC Berkeley...fell sharply.” Most of the details in the low mobility article were based on real data from the original article (including the previous quote) but anchored against higher statistics to make mobility appear lower, and some details were untrue (Both articles are provided in Appendix C).

After reading the article, participants were asked one factual comprehension check, indicating the title of the article they read out of five choices, and a manipulation check stating, “Based on the article you just read, what are the odds a graduate of UC Berkeley will move into a higher wealth quintile than his or her parents?” This question was on a scale of 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*). They were then asked several additional filler questions. Embedded within these was an additional question about article believability where they indicated agreement or disagreement with the statement “The article I just read was believable” on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

After the manipulation, participants were asked to answer the same SCPS measures as in Study 1 which were made into composites (HPS: $M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.79$, $\alpha = 0.70$; EPS: $M = 0.92$, $SD = 0.87$, $\alpha = 0.85$; FPS: $M = -0.77$, $SD = 0.86$, $\alpha = 0.82$). They then answered the same capability, likelihood, and temporal distance of SCPSs measures as in Study 1, but in this study there was only one question for each HPS-, EPS-, FPS- capable, likely, and temporal distance measure. In this case, both the occupation and income for each PS was shown to the participant in one question (as opposed to three questions for education, occupation, and income, as in Study 1). For example, “How capable to do feel of accomplishing your hoped for social-class possible self? You previously indicated your HPS Occupation: [HPS occupation] and HPS Income [HPS Income].” FPS-likely was also reverse coded as in Study 1, such that higher numbers meant that it was more likely that one’s FPS would not come true. Participants were then thanked, debriefed, and allotted class credit for completing the study. See Table 3 for descriptive statistics and correlations for all measures in Study 3.

Results

Manipulation Checks. All participants correctly indicated the title of the mobility article they read. A t-test on the mobility manipulation check question yielded a significant effect, such that those who were in the high mobility condition ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 0.96$) indicated that a UC

Berkeley graduate would be more likely to move into a higher wealth quintile than his or her parents than those in the low mobility condition indicated ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.79$; $t(390) = 16.08$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.62$). In addition, a t -test on the believability question also yielded a significant effect, such that those who were in the high mobility condition found the article slightly less believable ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.15$) than those in the low mobility condition ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.13$; $t(390) = -2.03$, $p = .04$, $d = 0.21$). This finding is surprising, however, because the high mobility article was completely factual, while the low mobility article included false information. Despite the small difference in conditions, participants found both articles, on average, more believable than not, as indicated by a t -test against the scale midpoint of 4 ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.15$; $t(390) = 25.51$, $p < .001$). In sum, the manipulation successfully led participants to believe that social mobility was higher or lower at UC Berkeley in the respective high and low mobility conditions.

SCPSs. SCPSs were analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the SCPSs were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 3-level within-subject possible self (HPS, EPS, FPS), 2-level between-subjects social mobility manipulation (high vs. low), the continuous family SC measure, and all subsequent two- and three-way interactions (See Figure 6). The social mobility manipulation produced no main effect or interaction effects with other variables (all F s < 2.14), which was inconsistent with Study 1 and will be addressed in the discussion of this study and the General Discussion.

However, replicating Studies 1 and 2, the model revealed a significant main effect of family SC, $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.04$, $F(1, 379.95) = 82.92$, $p < .001$, indicating that as family social class increases, HPS, EPS, and FPS become higher aiming. Additionally, there was also a significant main effect for Possible Self, $F(2, 753.23) = 1511.55$, $p < .001$, replicating the effects in all previous SCPS models, with each self significantly differing from all others. HPS were the highest aiming ($M = 1.58$, $SE = 0.04$), followed by EPS ($M = 0.93$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – HPS: $t(751.70) = 15.01$, $p < .001$), and then by FPS ($M = -0.76$, $SE = 0.04$; EPS – FPS: $t(753.09) = 38.41$, $p < .001$). Also replicating Study 1, these main effects were modified by a marginal Possible Self \times Family SC interaction effect that mirrored the same EPS effect in Study 1, $F(2, 753.59) = 2.63$, $p = .07$, in which the EPS slope was the steepest ($b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.05$) and differed from FPS ($b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.05$, EPS – FPS: $t(753.63) = 2.29$, $p = .07$).

Efficacy and Temporal Distance of SCPSs. HPS-, EPS-, and FPS- capable, likely, and time were analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the capable, likely, or time measures were the respective dependent variables, and the independent variables were 3-level within-subject possible self (HPS, EPS, FPS), 2-level between-subjects social mobility conditions (high vs. low), the continuous family SC measure, and all subsequent two- and three-way interactions.

Capability of Achieving SCPSs. The social mobility manipulation did not produce any main effects or interaction effects with other variables (all F s < 1). However, replicating Study 1, there was a main effect of possible self: $F(2, 758) = 21.75$, $p < .001$, in which individuals felt more capable of attaining their EPS ($M = 5.80$, $SE = 0.12$) than achieving their HPS ($M = 5.58$, $SE = 0.12$, EPS-HPS: $t(758) = 6.46$, $p < .001$), and also more capable of avoiding their FPS than achieving their HPS ($M = 4.97$, $SE = 0.12$, HPS-FPS: $t(758) = 4.38$, $p < .001$). Also replicating Study 1, there was a significant main effect for family SC: $b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, $F(1, 758) = 7.34$,

$p = .007$, in which individuals felt more capable of achieving each self as their family SC increased (see Figure 7 for full model).

Likelihood of SCPs. Crucial to the research question, the model revealed a marginal interaction effect for Social Mobility \times Family SC: $F(1, 378) = 3.12, p = .08$, in which the slope for family SC was positive in the low mobility condition ($b = 0.21, SE = 0.07, t(378) = 3.03, p = .003$), but was flat in the high mobility condition ($b = 0.03, SE = 0.07, t(378) = 0.36, p = .72$). This indicated that, across selves, when social mobility was low, being higher social class was associated with feeling that one's HPS and EPS were more likely to come true and their FPS was less likely to come true, while social class had no effect on the likelihood of them coming true in the high mobility condition. This finding supports the notion that a belief in social mobility can buffer the effect of social class on beliefs about likelihood of possible selves coming true. The analysis also replicated Study 1 with significant main effects for possible self: $F(2, 756) = 41.62, p < .001$ and for family SC: $b = 0.12, SE = 0.05, F(1, 378) = 5.31, p = .02$, though the positive effect of family SC on the likelihood of possible selves coming true was moderated by the above interaction. The possible self effect indicated that individuals felt their EPS was more likely to come true ($M = 5.60, SE = 0.06$) than their FPS was not to come true ($M = 5.23, SE = 0.06$, EPS-FPS: $t(756) = 9.11, p < .001$), and also that their FPS was more likely not to come true than their HPS was to come true ($M = 4.89, SE = 0.06$, HPS-FPS: $t(756) = -4.31, p < .001$; see Figure 8 for full model).

Subjective Temporal Distance of Possible Selves. Important to the research question, the model revealed a significant Possible Self \times Social Mobility \times Family SC interaction: $F(2, 754.88) = 6.51, p = .002$. This interaction was driven by a difference in the family SC slope for FPS between the high and low mobility conditions ($b = -0.52, SE = 0.19, t(1109.88) = -2.80, p = .005$), and the reverse, though marginal, difference in the family SC slope for HPS between high and low mobility conditions ($b = 0.35, SE = 0.19, t(1109.79) = -1.92, p = .06$). Specifically, the family SC slope for FPS in the low mobility condition was positive ($b = 0.35, SE = 0.12, t(1109.79) = 2.86, p = .004$), while in the high mobility condition it was negative, but not significant ($b = -0.16, SE = 0.14, t(1109.96) = -1.19, p = .23$). The family SC slope reversed for HPS, such that it was negative in the low mobility condition ($b = -0.21, SE = 0.12, t(1109.79) = -1.66, p = .10$), and that it was positive in the high mobility condition, but not significant ($b = 0.15, SE = 0.14, t(1109.79) = 1.09, p = .28$). The family SC slopes for EPS were not significant and did not differ between high mobility ($b = 0.08, SE = 0.14$) and low mobility ($b = -0.01, SE = 0.12$) conditions ($t(1109.79) = 0.48, p = .63$). In other words, the low mobility condition in this interaction replicates Study 1, such that family SC has little impact on how far away individuals' EPSs feel, but higher family SC was associated with HPSs feeling closer and FPSs feeling further. In the high mobility condition, the family SC effect was flat for all three possible selves, having no effect on how far away they felt. Finally, also replicating Study 1, the analysis revealed a significant main effect for possible self: $F(2, 755.11) = 37.88, p < .001$, though it was moderated by the above interaction. This main effect indicated that individuals believed their HPS ($M = 5.82, SE = 0.15$) felt further away than their EPS ($M = 4.17, SE = 0.15$; HPS-EPS: $t(755.07) = 7.96, p < .001$) and FPS ($M = 4.08, SE = 0.15$; HPS-FPS: $t(755.65) = 7.04, p < .001$).

In sum, people tended to see their HPSs as furthest away, and their EPSs and FPSs as closer, but this was also affected by family SC and social mobility. Specifically, when mobility was perceived to be low, higher family SC was associated with feeling that HPSs are closer and

FPSs are further, but when mobility was perceived to be high, family SC no longer had an effect. This supports the notion that beliefs in social mobility can buffer the effect of family SC on the temporal distance of possible selves. (see Figure 9 for full model).

Discussion

Though we did not replicate the correlational social mobility findings in Study 1, whereby social mobility beliefs changed the effect family social class had on EPSs and FPSs, Study 3 provided some support for H4b by showing that social mobility matters for perceived attainment of SCPSs, specifically the likelihood of them coming true and their temporal distance. In the context of high social mobility, versus low mobility, the positive effect of family social class on the likelihood of SCPSs coming true decreased. In addition, when mobility was perceived to be low, higher social class was associated with HPSs feeling closer and FPSs feeling further away, but when mobility was high, both of these effects were also attenuated.

Study 3 also replicated Studies 1 and 2 by demonstrating that SCPSs are conceptually distinct (H1a: HPSs were higher aiming than EPSs, which in turn were higher aiming than FPSs) and that family social class consistently positively predicted SCPSs (H2a), with the strongest effect on EPSs. In addition, the low mobility conditions also replicated Study 1 findings for capability of achieving selves, likelihood of them coming true, and their temporal distance (H4a & H4b). When mobility was perceived to be low, individuals felt that they were most capable of achieving their EPSs, EPSs were most likely to come true, and EPSs and FPSs felt closest to the present self. After EPSs, individuals believed that they were capable of achieving their HPSs and avoiding their FPSs and that their FPSs were less likely to come true. Individuals were the most unsure about their HPSs, they felt they that they were the least likely to come true, and that they felt the farthest away. Finally, the higher one's family social class, the more capable people felt in achieving their SCPSs (across mobility conditions) and the more likely they were to come true (in the low mobility condition). Higher family social class also led to the perception that individuals' HPSs were closer and FPSs were further but did not affect perceptions of EPS distance, but also only in the low mobility condition.

Study 4

Study 4 was a correlational study designed to test H1b and H3b. Studies 1-3 examined SCPSs as differentially high or low aiming plans for future education, job prestige, income, and rank-order social class and the role of family social class as a predictor. In Study 4, we expanded the conception of SCPSs to include the cultural values and behaviors that may stem from these SCPSs. Given that higher social class is associated with a more independent model of the self that tends to reflect American cultural norms and standards of success, Study 4 examined if these culturally-relevant values and behaviors would also be representative of future SCPSs. Further, if family social class predicts future SCPSs, it is also likely that it will predict these future cultural values insofar as they relate to SCPSs. We tested these questions in a correlational design by collecting participants' demographic and social class information, then providing participants with a description of possible selves (as in Study 1) and asking them to provide open-ended responses describing each future possible self. After, participants answered a series of questions designed to measure how descriptive several cultural values are of their future selves. Finally, they filled out the same SCPS measures as used in Studies 1-3. In two mixed-model designs, we

examined mean-level differences in SCPSs and cultural values (H1a & H1b) and the predictive role of family social class for each of these (H2a & H2b).

Method

Participants. Two hundred forty-seven participants were recruited via Amazon's MTurk in return for a \$1.50 payment. Participants were required to be living in the U.S and between the ages of 18-30 to participate in the study. Forty-six participants were removed from the sample due to failing one or more of up to three attention checks, 23 more were removed due to failing a cultural check designed to ensure participants were living in the U.S., and 21 more were removed due to not following directions on open-ended questions. The final sample size was 157. Participant ages ranged from 20 to 30 ($M = 26.66$, $SD = 2.58$) and the sample included 101 males, 54 females, and 3 other genders. Additionally, it was 68% White, 8% Asian, 8% Latino/a, 13% African American, 1% Native American, and 2% Mixed.

Measures & Procedure. Participants completed the study on their own personal computers. The study was correlational in design. Participants first completed the same demographics and SES questions as in Study 1. As in Study 1, the individual and family SES measures were made into composites (Family SC: $\alpha = 0.78$, Current SC: $M = -0.22$, $SD = 0.80$, $\alpha = 0.73$). After reading the same description of possible selves as in Study 1, they were asked to write about their imagined future hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves.⁴ After, they answered the same SCPS measures as in Study 1 which were also made into composites (HPS: $M = 1.49$, $SD = 0.78$, $\alpha = 0.68$; EPS: $M = 0.73$, $SD = 0.84$, $\alpha = 0.79$; FPS: $M = -0.49$, $SD = 0.89$, $\alpha = 0.88$). After completing these measures, participants answered a series of questions regarding their cultural values, as detailed below.

Cultural Values. We developed items tapping traditionally American cultural values to determine how people see their future hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves differently in terms of future preferences, choices, activities, and behaviors, and how close these were to American cultural ideals. This measure involved four separate questionnaires with 13 items each asking participants to indicate the extent to which several statements described their current self, HPS, EPS, and FPS on a scale of 1 (*does not describe my [current self / HPS / EPS / FPS]*) to 5 (*describes my [current self / HPS / EPS / FPS] extremely well*). The statements they rated included: "Engages in volunteer work," "Spends a lot of time with family," "Spends a lot of time with friends," "Has strong personal relationships," "Has a significant other," "Has one or more children," "Pursues personal growth," "Has enjoyable hobbies," "Has the ability to travel," "Has time for leisure," "Owns a home," "Is health conscious," and "Has concerns about money." We reverse-scored the "Has concerns about money" item and created a composite for each of these measures (Cultural Current: $M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.65$, $\alpha = .75$; Cultural HPS: $M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.73$, α

⁴ As in Study 1, the open-ended possible selves measures were not used in the analyses. However, as noted in the Participants section, 21 participants who did not follow directions on this measure were removed from the analysis.

= .84; Cultural EPS: $M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.75$, $\alpha = .84$; Cultural FPS: $M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.97$, $\alpha = .92$). The high Cronbach's alphas indicated these measures held together satisfactorily.

End of Study Measures. This study and Study 5 were conducted at a point in time when problems due to MTurk bots and participants using server farms to alter their locations had been increasing. To address this issue, at the end of the survey, participants were asked a new question to ensure they were indeed living in the U.S. In line with previous research used to provide additional checks on MTurk populations (TurkPrime, 2018), participants viewed an image of an eggplant and were asked to identify it in an open-ended question. Twenty-three participants that identified it as a brinjal (the word for eggplant in India) and also stated in the demographics portion that they were born in the U.S. were removed from analyses, as noted above. Participants were then thanked and paid for their participation. See Table 4 for descriptive statistics and correlations for all measures in Study 4.

Results

SCPSs. SCPSs were analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the SCPSs were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 4-level within-subject possible self (HPS, EPS, FPS), family SC, and the Possible Self \times Family SC interaction (See Figure 10). Importantly, and replicating Studies 1 and 2, the model revealed a significant main effect of family SC, $b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.05$, $F(1, 154) = 24.60$, $p < .001$, indicating that as family social class increased, HPS, EPS, and FPS became higher aiming. Additionally, there was also a significant main effect for possible self, $F(2, 308) = 321.95$, $p < .001$, replicating the effects in all previous SCPS models, with each self significantly differing from all others. HPS were the highest aiming ($M = 1.49$, $SE = 0.06$), followed by EPS ($M = 0.72$, $SE = 0.06$; EPS – HPS: $t(308) = -9.65$, $p < .001$), and then by FPS ($M = -0.50$, $SE = 0.06$; EPS – FPS: $t(308) = 15.51$, $p < .001$). These main effects were also modified by a significant Possible Self \times Family SC interaction effect that mirrored the same effect in Studies 1 and 3, $F(2, 308) = 3.62$, $p = .02$, driven by a steeper family SC slope for EPS ($b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.08$) differing from less steep slope for HPS ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.08$, EPS – HPS: $t(308) = 2.55$, $p = .03$).

Cultural Values. Each cultural value was associated with its relevant SCPS. Hoped-for cultural values were positively associated with hoped-for SCPS: $r(157) = .20$, $p = .01$, expected cultural values were positively associated with expected SCPS: $r(157) = .39$, $p < .001$, and feared cultural values were positively associated with feared SCPS: $r(157) = .54$, $p < .001$. These findings supported the notion that future traditionally American cultural values were associated with future representations of one's social class.

In addition, cultural values were analyzed with a mixed model ANCOVA, in which the cultural values were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 4-level within-subject possible or current self (Current, HPS, EPS, FPS), family SC, and the Possible Self \times Family SC interaction (See Figure 11). Replicating the previous studies in the new domain of class-relevant cultural values, the model revealed a significant main effect of family SC, $b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.05$, $F(1, 154) = 2.83$, $p = .005$, indicating that as family social class increased, all traditionally American cultural values were perceived as more descriptive of the current, hoped-for, expected, and feared selves. Additionally, there was also a significant main effect for possible self, $F(3, 462) = 169.30$, $p < .001$, indicating that the cultural values were also

differentially descriptive of each given possible self. Similar to the findings for SCPSs, people believed their HPS was most closely associated with traditional American cultural values ($M = 3.70$, $SE = 0.06$), followed by EPS ($M = 3.43$, $SE = 0.06$; EPS – HPS: $t(462) = -3.72$, $p = .001$), then by their current Self ($M = 3.06$, $SE = 0.06$; Current – EPS: $t(462) = -5.17$, $p < .001$), and finally by FPS ($M = 2.18$, $SE = 0.06$; Current – FPS: $t(462) = 12.22$, $p < .001$). These main effects were also modified by a significant Possible Self \times Family SC interaction effect, $F(3, 462) = 4.43$, $p = .004$, driven by a positive family SC slope for FPS ($b = 0.29$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(469.59) = 3.94$, $p < .001$), but no slope for HPS ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(469.59) = -0.20$, $p = .84$; Family SC FPS – Family SC HPS: $t(462) = 3.55$, $p = .003$). This interaction represented the extreme ends of a trend in family SC having no relationship with cultural values for HPS, to a slight positive relationship for EPS ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(469.59) = 1.65$, $p = .10$), to a stronger positive relationship for current self ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(469.59) = 2.54$, $p = .01$), to the strongest positive relationship for FPS.

In summary, higher family social class was associated with having future selves that engage more in behaviors and values associated with American cultural ideals. In addition, hoped-for selves were the most likely to pursue these ideals, followed by expected selves, then current selves, and lastly by feared selves. Notably, family social class was also differentially associated with each self, such that it had no effect on hoped-for possible selves, but a large effect on feared possible selves. This suggests that regardless of one's social class background, people tend to have hoped-for future selves consistent with American cultural ideals, like owning a home or having leisure time. However, people's social class backgrounds do have an effect on feared selves such that people that grew up more well off had feared selves that were closer to American ideals than those who grew up less well off. In other words, the feared possible selves that richer individuals imagined were still closer to achieving American cultural ideals than were the worst selves of poorer individuals.

Discussion

Study 4 demonstrated that perceptions of hoped-for, expected, and feared social class differ not only when defined by more objective measures of future social class (SCPSs measured as prestige, income, and SSS rank; supporting H1a), but also by cultural values, supporting H2a. Specifically, people believed that their hoped-for selves were more likely to engage in traditional American cultural values (home ownership, leisure time, etc.) than their expected selves, followed by their feared selves. We also extended the role of family class background in predicting these cultural values, supporting H3b. Study 4 showed that family social class was positively associated with future selves supporting these cultural values more, but that this was particularly strong for feared selves, weakened for expected selves, and was the weakest for hoped-for selves. In sum, family social class has an impact on individuals' future cultural values, but this impact is strongest for feared selves and reduces for hoped-for selves. We causally tested this family social class effect in Study 5.

Finally, Study 4 also replicated the SCPS findings in Studies 1, 2, and 3, demonstrating that SCPSs are distinct (H1a), and that family social class positively predicts all three, but has the strongest effect on EPSs (H3a).

Study 5

Study 5 was an experimental study designed to replicate the findings in Study 4 by testing the causal effect of family social class on future cultural values (H3b) and also by examining the mean-level differences in cultural values for each possible self (H1b). In this study, we asked online participants to imagine their income had increased or decreased by 50% and write about how it would affect their lifestyles. We then asked participants to write about their HPS, EPS, and FPS in the context of this income change. Reminding participants of the possible selves they described, we had participants fill out the same cultural values measures in Study 4. In this study, we did not include the quantitative SCPS measure used in previous studies because these included a measure of future income, which would effectively be a manipulation check rather than a meaningful dependent variable in the context of the income manipulation we used in this study.

Method

Participants. Two hundred ninety-seven participants were recruited via Amazon's MTurk in return for a \$1.10 payment. Participants were required to be living in the U.S and between the ages of 18-30 to participate in the study. Fifty-one participants were removed from the sample due to failing one or more of up to three attention or factual comprehension checks, 6 more were removed due to failing the same cultural check used in Study 4 that was designed to ensure participants were living in the U.S., and 7 more were removed due to not following directions on open-ended questions. The final sample size was 233. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 30 ($M = 26.85$, $SD = 2.84$) and the sample included 125 males and 108 females. Additionally, it was 75% White, 7% Asian, 7% Latino/a, 6% African American, and 5% Mixed.

Measures & Procedure. Participants completed the study on their own personal computers. The study was experimental in design. Participants first completed the same demographics and a subset of only the individual-level SES questions as in Study 1. This information was not used in the analyses.

The study then moved to the income manipulation. This was modeled after the manipulation used in Lee, Hall, and Wood (2018). In this manipulation, participants were randomly assigned to either imagine that their monthly income had increased by 50% (*income increase* condition) or that their monthly income decreased by 50% (*income decrease* condition). They were then asked to spend three minutes writing about how they planned to live on their new income. After the manipulation, participants were asked to answer a comprehension question indicating if their income increased or decreased by 50%. Thirteen (4%) participants that answered incorrectly were removed from the analysis, as noted above. Next, participants were given two manipulation checks. One asked "How would you say you felt in the hypothetical situation you were asked to imagine?" with participants indicating between 1 (*very financially constrained*) to 7 (*very financially comfortable*). The second manipulation check was a modified version of the 9-rung version of the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Socioeconomic Status that was used in previous studies (Adler et al., 2000), but instead asked participants, "With

your newly increased/decreased monthly income, where would you place yourself on this ladder?”

After the manipulation, participants were directed to the dependent measures. First, participants answered the current version of the cultural values measure in Study 4 but prefaced with “Please answer the following questions about yourself, accounting for how you might be affected by your current increase/decrease in income.” (Cultural Current: $M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.77$, $\alpha = .83$). After this, participants received the same possible selves description as in all previous studies, and were asked to write about their imagined future hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves given the changes in income.⁵ Next, participants were asked to respond to the same cultural values measures as in Study 4 for each HPS, EPS, and FPS, all of which were prefaced by the same statements reminding them to consider their imagined increase or decreases in income (Cultural HPS: $M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.92$, $\alpha = .89$; Cultural EPS: $M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.94$, $\alpha = .90$; Cultural FPS: $M = 2.07$, $SD = 0.93$, $\alpha = .91$). Participants were then thanked, debriefed, and paid for their participation. See Table 5 for descriptive statistics and correlations for all measures in Study 5.

Results

Manipulation Checks. A *t*-test on the manipulation check question about feeling financial comfort yielded a significant effect, such that those who imagined their income increased indicated they would be more financially comfortable ($M = 6.33$, $SD = 0.79$) than those who imagined their income decreased ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 1.12$; $t(231) = 35.55$, $p < .001$, $d = 4.66$). In addition, *t*-tests on the manipulation check question indicating ranking on a social class ladder yielded a similar significant effect, such that those who imagined their income increased indicated they would rank higher ($M = 6.42$, $SD = 1.79$) than those who imagined their income decreased ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.37$; $t(231) = 12.89$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.69$). In other words, both manipulation checks indicated that the manipulation successfully led participants in the increase or decrease conditions to feel, respectively, more financially comfortable and higher in social class rank or more financially constrained and lower in social class rank.

Cultural Values. Cultural values were analyzed with a mixed model 4×2 ANOVA, in which the cultural values were the dependent variable, and the independent variables were 4-level within-subject possible or current self (Current, HPS, EPS, FPS), and the 2-level between subjects income manipulation (increase or decrease), and the Possible Self \times Income interaction (See Figure 12). The model revealed a main effect of income, $F(1, 231) = 16.31$, $p < .001$, in which participants’ future selves were more supportive of traditionally American cultural values when they imagined their income increasing ($M = 3.12$, $SE = 0.06$) than when they imagined it decreasing ($M = 2.77$, $SE = 0.06$). In addition, the model replicated the cultural values differences in Study 4 with a main effect of possible self, $F(3, 693) = 199.22$, $p < .001$, in which these cultural values were considered the most descriptive for HPS ($M = 3.52$, $SE = 0.06$), followed by EPS ($M = 3.20$, $SE = 0.06$; HPS–EPS: $t(693) = 5.00$, $p < .001$), then by current self

⁵ As in Studies 1, 3, and 4, the open-ended possible selves measures were not used in the analyses. However, as noted in the Participants section, seven participants who did not follow directions on this measure were removed from the analysis.

($M = 3.01$, $SE = 0.06$; Current – EPS: $t(693) = -3.17$, $p = .01$), and finally by FPS ($M = 2.07$, $SE = 0.06$; Current – FPS: $t(693) = 15.02$, $p < .001$). These main effects were also modified by a significant Possible Self \times Income interaction effect, $F(3, 693) = 3.88$, $p = .009$, which was driven by individuals' HPSs, EPSs, and current selves supporting these traditional cultural values more when income was imagined to increase versus decrease (HPS Increase-Decrease: $b = 0.31$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(617.23) = 2.72$, $p = .007$; EPS Increase-Decrease: $b = 0.50$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(617.23) = 4.35$, $p < .001$; current self Increase-Decrease: $b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(617.23) = -3.97$, $p < .001$), but that there was no difference for FPSs when income was increased or decreased (FPS Increase-Decrease: $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.11$, $t(617.23) = 0.99$, $p = .32$). Though the main effects in this model mirrored Study 4, the interaction in Study 4 indicated a strong family SC effect on FPS cultural values, less on EPS, and none on HPS. In this study, however, the interaction indicated the opposite effect: income had the strongest effect on HPS and EPS cultural values and no effect on FPS. This divergence will be discussed with some possible explanations in the General Discussion.

Discussion

Study 5 showed that social class is a causal, positive predictor of future class-relevant cultural values. Specifically, social class, when manipulated to be higher (vs. lower) income, led people to believe that traditionally American cultural values would be more descriptive of their hoped-for and expected selves (H3b). This finding replicates the family social class effect in Study 4, though the studies differ on which future cultural values are affected the most strongly by social class. While family social class had the strongest effect on cultural values for feared possible selves in Study 4, the income manipulation yielded the smallest effect on cultural values for feared possible selves in this study. These differences, and potential explanations for them, will be addressed more fully in the General Discussion. Finally, Study 5 also replicated differences in cultural values for each possible self as in Study 4 (H1b). In Study 5, people believed that American cultural values would be more representative of their hoped-for selves, followed by their expected selves, and lastly, by their feared selves.

General Discussion

Returning to the words of James Truslow Adams, do people believe they can attain the American Dream of "...[a] social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position?" Across seven studies with cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental designs using both U.S. general and college student samples of young adults, we provide evidence using the novel conceptualization of social class possible selves to answer this question. The answer to this question appears to be both yes and no. Yes, people believe there are futures to be achieved that go beyond their current circumstances, and also expected futures higher-aiming, but similar to their current situations, and futures to be avoided. Also, no, people's thoughts about what their futures will be and how likely they will be achieved are highly influenced by their "fortuitous circumstances of birth or position," or their social class backgrounds. More precisely, this line of research provides evidence supporting four related research questions: 1. Are social class possible selves and their cultural values meaningful and distinct? 2. Do social class possible selves motivate and drive

behavior? 3. Does family social class predict each social class possible self? And 4. Do social class possible selves differ in how achievable and distant they feel? For each research question, we address the overall findings and their implications.

Social Class Possible Selves are Meaningful Indications of Future Social Class

People have ideas about their future social class: they expect their future social class to be higher than their current social class and family social class backgrounds, and they have ideas about their future social class that range from expectations, to hopes, to fears representing different versions of how their lives may pan out. These ideas manifest in future expectations of more objective measures of social class, such as career choice, prestige, and income, and also in perceptions of how future selves will subscribe to traditionally American, independent cultural ideals. Across all studies, we provide evidence supporting these claims through the novel construct of social class possible selves. In Studies 1, 2, 3, and 4, we measured hoped-for, expected, and feared social class possible selves as composites of future job prestige, income, and subjective socioeconomic status. Studies 1a-1c provided initial evidence with a young-adult MTurk sample that hoped-for SCPSs were higher aiming than expected selves, and expected SCPSs were higher aiming than feared SCPSs. Further, these studies provided evidence that hoped-for and expected SCPSs were higher aiming than current and family social class, and feared SCPSs were lower aiming. Study 2 replicated these findings among hoped-for and expected SCPSs in a college student sample, also showing that these different conceptualizations of future social class apply to possible selves one-year post-graduation and in the general future. Study 3 replicated these findings in a student sample in the context of a social mobility manipulation – even in the context of high or low mobility, people’s future SCPSs were still distinct from one another and reflected the same linear pattern of hoped-for being highest, followed by expected, followed by feared. Finally, Study 4 found the same evidence in a direct replication of Study 1.

Studies 4 and 5 also built upon the SCPS framework by demonstrating that these future representations of social class are not just measures of objective social class, but also include varying levels of support for traditional American, independent cultural values. Study 4 showed that people indicated cultural values associated with these American ideals (such as having leisure time and owning a home) were the most descriptive of their hoped-for possible selves, followed by their expected possible selves, then current selves, and lastly by their feared possible selves, though the differences in these values decreased when social class was higher. Supporting these findings about differences in cultural selves, Study 5 showed that in the context of an experimental income manipulation, regardless of imagining income to increase or decrease, these cultural values were again the most descriptive of hoped-for possible selves, followed by expected possible selves, then current selves, and lastly by feared possible selves. In other words, Studies 4 and 5 support the notion that future selves are descriptively different in terms of the values, activities, and behaviors people expect to engage in. Moreover, people perceive that their hoped-for future selves will support values in line with American, independent cultural ideals, that their expected selves will do so somewhat less, and that their feared selves will do so the least.

This evidence supports previous evidence that people think about their future social class (e.g., Cross & Markus, 1991; Destin et al., 2017; Destin & Debrosse, 2017). Specifically, this evidence provides support for the novel conceptualization of future social class as future hoped-

for, expected, and feared possible selves, suggesting that people don't have only one representation of their future social class, but rather ideas about best-, expected, and worst-case scenarios for how their lives might turn out. These scenarios, or hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves are different – they represent varying levels of career opportunity and prestige, income, subjective socioeconomic status, and cultural values, and they represent changes from their current selves and their family's social class backgrounds.

Social Class Possible Selves Motivate Behavior

Social class possible selves are an important predictor of social class attainment behavior. Supporting previous research on the motivating power of possible selves (e.g. Markus & Wurf, 1987; Oyserman, 2001), Study 2 provided evidence in a college student sample that social class possible selves are predictive of behavior in a context where they are contextually relevant (i.e. consistent with one's identity as a student at a prestigious university; e.g. Elmore & Oyserman, 2012) and meaningful (involving the pursuit of social class related endeavors; e.g. Destin and Oyserman, 2010). Specifically, Study 2 measured, at the beginning of the semester, students' social class possible selves for one-year post-graduation and in the general future. At the end of the semester, we followed up on students' applications to jobs, internships, graduate schools, and other applications. In this study, higher aiming hoped-for and expected SCPSs predicted more overall applications, controlling for graduation year and family social class, and they were associated with applying to positions with higher wages. It is also worth noting that SCPSs did not predict effort participants put into applications, how much they wanted the positions, or how prestigious these positions were. This evidence builds on extant research on the motivating power of possible selves but does so in the new domain of social class possible selves and is the first study to show that possible selves (specifically social class possible selves) motivate in the meaningful domain of job applications.

Family Social Class Drives Social Class Possible Selves

Family social class is an important and unique predictor of social class possible selves and values. Though the idea that family social class is predictive of future aspirations and expectations in the social class domain is not new (e.g. Aries & Seider, 2007; Blustein et al., 2002; Brown et al., 1996; Cook et al., 1996; Furlong & Cartmel, 1995; Hannah & Kahn, 1989; Howard et al., 2011; Lapour & Heppner, 2009; MacLeod, 2018; Metz et al., 2009; Pisarik & Shoffner, 2009; Rojewski, 2005; Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Rojewski & Yang, 1997; Trusty, 2000), this set of studies is the first to study how family social class predicts future social class possible selves. We found correlational evidence in Studies 1, 2, 3, and 4 that family social class, measured as parent's job prestige, income, and subjective socioeconomic status when participants were 18, was consistently positively predictive of hoped-for, expected, and feared social class possible selves. In addition, in Studies 1, 3, and 4, we found that family social class was most strongly positively associated with expected social class possible selves, and less positively associated with hoped-for and feared selves. In Study 2, family social class was similarly associated with both hoped-for and expected social class possible selves. In other words, the more well-off people are, the more well-off they perceive their expected SCPSs to be. In addition, the more well-off people are, the more they perceive their hoped-for and feared SCPSs to be, though most of our evidence suggests that this relationship is not as strong as it is

for expected SCPSs. Unfortunately, this also means that those who grow up in poverty, compared to those growing up with wealth, are more likely to perceive their hoped-for, expected, and feared selves to be poorer than the wealthier people perceive their future SCPSs to be. Ultimately, though everyone has, on average, higher aiming hoped-for and expected SCPSs than their current selves, the effect of social class on these future selves means that people perceive that the social class gap will continue to perpetuate – future social class possible selves are anchored on family social class backgrounds. This anchoring effect extends also to feared social class possible selves – those who grow up poorer imagine worse-off feared selves than those who grow up richer.

In Studies 4 and 5, we also found correlational and experimental evidence, respectively, supporting the notion that family social class positively predicts the extent to which cultural values indicative of supporting traditional American ideals will be associated with people's future hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves. We find that if people were wealthier when growing up (Study 4), or if they imagined their income increasing (as opposed to decreasing; Study 5), they perceived their hoped-for, expected, feared selves, on average, to be more supportive of traditionally American cultural values such as having leisure time and owning a home. This indicates that family social class is not just predictive of more objective measures of future social class, but also predictive of striving to achieve more traditional American cultural ideals.

It is also worth noting, though, that Studies 4 and 5 did provide less consistent evidence as to how family social class was associated with cultural values for each possible self. In the correlational Study 4, family social class had the strongest positive impact on cultural values for feared possible selves, followed by a weaker impact on expected possible selves, and almost no impact on hoped-for possible selves. However, in Study 5, the income manipulation produced the largest differences between high and low income for hoped-for and expected possible selves, and almost no difference for feared possible selves. We explore explanations for these differences under Limitations and Future Directions.

Study 1 also provided evidence that family social class is a particularly strong and unique predictor of SCPSs, predicting them both controlling for other relevant beliefs and perceptions of the world including social mobility beliefs, beliefs in system legitimacy, social class collective self-esteem, social class importance to identity, and optimism. All of these measures also had positive effects on SCPSs, but none were as strong as family social class. In addition, while social mobility beliefs and collective social class self-esteem produced respective three-way interactions with possible selves and family social class, moderating the way in which family social class predicted each specific SCPS, none of these measures produced a two-way interaction moderating the overall main effect of family social class. Indeed, even in the context of Study 3's social mobility manipulation, the effect of social class on SCPSs was not moderated by social mobility. This provided additional evidence that even in the context of a belief in social mobility, beliefs system legitimacy, high class-based self-esteem, stronger identification with one's social class identity, or high optimism, family social class most strongly predicted the way in which people saw their future social class. The implication here is that the impact of social class background on future social class possible selves may be very hard to alter. For example, imagine how a lifetime of experience in a low-income household, with parents that are not highly educated and are struggling to get by compares to a lifetime of experience in a well-educated, wealthy household with few financial worries. The present line of research supports how these

experiences are likely to have a strong and enduring impact on individuals' perceptions of their future class.

Social Class Possible Selves Differ in Efficacy and Temporal Distance

Social class possible selves have meaning not just in how high-aiming or different they are, but also in how likely people feel they are to come true, how achievable they feel, how temporally distant they feel, and further, how these efficacy outcomes are also predicted by family social class. In correlational Study 1 and in the low mobility condition of Study 3, we provided evidence that individuals felt that they were most capable of achieving their EPSs, EPSs were most likely to come true, and EPSs and FPSs felt closest to the present self. After EPSs, individuals believed that they were capable of achieving their HPSs and avoiding their FPSs and that their FPSs were less likely to come true. Individuals were the most unsure about their HPSs, they felt they that they were the least likely to come true and felt the farthest away from them. Finally, again in correlational Study 1 and in the low mobility condition of Study 3, the higher one's family social class background, the more capable people felt in achieving their SCPSs and the more likely they were to come true (though these were marginal effects in Study 1 and significant in Study 3). Higher family social class also led to the perception that individuals' HPSs were closer and FPSs were further but did not affect perceptions of EPS distance.

Importantly, the likelihood and temporal distance effects were moderated by manipulated social mobility in Study 3. In the context of high social mobility, versus low mobility, the positive effect of family social class on the likelihood of SCPSs coming true decreased. In addition, when mobility was perceived to be low, higher social class was associated with HPSs feeling closer and FPSs feeling further away, but when mobility was high, both of these effects were also attenuated.

These findings have important implications, showing that SCPSs matter not only in terms of how high-aiming they are, but also that people have different expectations about their representations of future social class coming true. Unsurprisingly, people believe their expected SCPSs are more likely to occur, more attainable, and closest to the current self, given that these represent people's most realistic future realities. These findings also have important implications for social mobility beliefs. While the impact of social mobility beliefs on SCPSs was inconsistent between Studies 1b/1c and Study 3, Study 3 showed that social mobility beliefs are a possible method of buffering the family social class effect on perceptions of likelihood of SCPSs coming true and how far away they feel. Insofar as perceptions of likelihood of SCPSs coming true and temporal distance of SCPSs are related to how motivational these SCPSs are, a belief in social mobility could reduce the effect family social class background has on whether or not people pursue their SCPSs.

Limitations and Future Directions

The seven studies in this line of research provide robust evidence that social class possible selves are meaningful, predicted by family social class background, and predictive of social-class relevant behavior. Further, they are associated with pursuit of American cultural values and differ in terms of their efficaciousness and temporal distance. Despite the notable strengths of this line of research showing these robust effects across two different kinds of

subject populations and several research designs, much of this work is still exploratory and there are several limitations and ways in which it could be improved.

While this set of studies shows that people are able to identify quantitatively different hoped-for, expected, and feared social class possible selves, this set of studies does not address whether these social class possible selves are akin to the spontaneous ways in which people think about future social class. For a given person, are perceptions of future social class delineated as hoped-for, expected, and feared? Further, if examining qualitative descriptions of future possible selves rather than the quantitative way in which we measure them, do people spontaneously identify social class possible selves within these descriptions? Future research could better answer these questions by measuring possible selves and social class possible selves both quantitatively and qualitatively and examining how they relate.

Another limitation is the inclusion of only one study on how social class possible selves motivate behavior. A myriad of research supports the notion that possible selves can drive behavior, but that there are caveats as to when and how. For example, research shows they are more motivating if best possible selves are primed (Destin et al., 2018), if they have strategies associated with them (Oyserman et al., 2002, 2004, 2006, 2011) if they are contextually relevant (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012), if they are meaningful (Destin and Oyserman, 2010), and if difficulty in pursuing them indicates importance (Elmore, et al., 2016). While this study provided evidence that SCPSs are predictive of behavior when they are meaningful and contextually relevant, this study was longitudinal and had no less meaningful or contextual comparisons. Future research could improve the social class possible selves model by addressing other domains in which they motivate behavior, such as academic outcomes or workplace performance. In addition, implied but not tested in this set of studies is the idea that family social class drives the development of social class possible selves, which, in turn, predict behavior. This model needs further evidence addressing whether this process does occur and addressing if social class possible selves motivate behavior above and beyond family social class backgrounds.

This line of research shows consistent and robust findings that family social class is a predictor of future SCPSs, but a limitation is that this is only shown through cross-sectional, correlational studies. While the question is not necessarily if family social class *causes* social class possible selves because this relationship cannot be explained in the reverse (social class possible selves cannot cause family social class), rather the important question that we have not yet addressed is to what extent social class drives the development of and changes in social class possible selves irrespective of other potentially relevant drivers. For example, when do people develop social class possible selves and what aspects of their social class growing up most influence these selves? Does it result more from lifestyle growing up, awareness of the ways in which parents saved and spent money, or does it result more from parent education and the extent to which they impress upon their children the importance of education? These questions could best be addressed in longitudinal designs or in designs more qualitative in nature. Another question is if changes in actual social class or the perception of one's social class can impact one's future social class possible selves, and if this is possible to test experimentally. For example, would fleeting experimental manipulations, like the income manipulation used in Study 5, or a manipulation whereby people are primed to think about times in their development when resources were scarce or abundant (e.g., Mehta & Zhu, 2016) actually have an impact on how high-aiming future social class possible selves are? We speculate that social class possible selves may be fairly ingrained within individuals' perceptions of their current and future selves and

therefore would not be easily affected by fleeting experimental manipulations. Therefore, it may instead be best examined in future longitudinal designs.

Many of the findings in this set of research are consistent and robust, particularly the effect of social class on SCPSs, but another limitation is the relatively inconsistent findings about social mobility. In Studies 1b and 1c, measured social mobility beliefs produced a main effect and a three-way interaction with family social class and possible selves on future SCPSs. Social mobility beliefs led to higher-aiming social class possible selves overall, and also changed the effect family social class had on hoped-for and feared selves when mobility beliefs were low or high. In Study 3's social mobility manipulation, these effects were not replicated – social mobility had no impact on future possible selves. Social mobility beliefs did, however, attenuate the impact of family social class on likelihood of social class possible selves coming true and the temporal distance of these selves. More research is needed to address if social mobility beliefs can attenuate the effects of family social class on future SCPSs, and to replicate the effects found in Study 3.

One strength of this research is the new evidence we provide showing that future representations of social class are also characterized by support of traditionally American cultural values, which are additionally predicted by family social class backgrounds. However, in examining these perceptions of future values, Studies 4 and 5 were inconsistent in terms of which future cultural values (HPS, EPS, or FPS) were most affected by family social class. While Study 4 showed that family social class had the strongest impact on the cultural values of feared selves and almost none on hoped-for selves, Study 5 showed the opposite. Several explanations could account for this difference. One could be the operationalization of social class between Studies 4 and 5. In Studies 1-4, we focused on family social class background. Though it is highly correlated with current social class, particularly for young adults who have not yet established their own independent financial lives separate from their parents, family social class is still not a measure of an individual's current income. However, in Study 5, imagining changes in one's current income was precisely the manipulation used. It is possible that different instantiations of social class produce different outcomes on valuing American ideals. Another possibility could be the result of the study designs themselves. In Study 4, people simply provided their SCPSs as they currently were. However, in Study 5, participants were first asked to imagine a change in their current income, then asked to explain how it would affect their current life. From there, they were asked to describe their future possible selves taking into account the change in their current income, and finally asked to rate how descriptive cultural values were of these future possible selves. It is possible that asking participants to imagine a change in income like this would lead to less realistic hoped-for, expected, and feared possible selves due to an over- or underestimation of the impact a change in income would have (e.g., Wilson & Gilbert, 2005), and thus they would not reflect those generated in a correlational design. Future studies should utilize different social class manipulations and/or longitudinal designs that enable tracking changes in current social class and SCPSs over time, and in relation to social class backgrounds.

Another limitation regarding the extent to which future selves support traditionally American cultural values in Studies 4 and 5 is if this is the most appropriate measure to capture cultural differences. The composite measure of traditionally American cultural values is face valid in terms of how one supports stereotypical, traditional American values that reflect, to an extent, attainment of the American Dream. However, this scale has not been tested for convergent or discriminant reliability against other measures, specifically more traditional

independence-interdependence scales (e.g. Lu & Gilmour, 2006; Harb & Smith, 2008) or other indications of signaling class-relevant values and behaviors. Further, this scale provides information only on the extent to which people subscribe to traditionally American cultural ideals on the whole, rather than descriptive information on how some people might value certain ideals more than others. Future research would best expand on how future selves support different cultural values by testing other scales or utilizing more qualitative, descriptive measures.

Finally, another limitation is the extent to which efficacy and temporal distance of SCPSs actually matter for individuals. Though we find that expected selves feel more attainable, closer, and more likely than hoped-for and feared selves, and that these efficacy and distance perceptions are affected by family social class, do these findings have implications for people's actual behavior and outcomes? While extant research suggests that when possible selves feel closer, they are more motivational (Peetz et al., 2009), and that when they are associated with attainment strategies they are also more associated with behavioral outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2002, 2004, 2006, 2011), our line of research does not answer this question. Future research would best address how efficaciousness and distance of social class possible selves actually impacts possible-self oriented behavior. Specifically, future research should examine the extent to which people may more likely to pursue social class possible selves if they feel more likely, capable, or closer.

Conclusion

The current research advances the literatures on possible selves, social class, and social mobility through the novel conceptualization of social class possible selves. In one longitudinal, four correlational, and two experimental studies, we provide evidence that social class possible selves are meaningful representations of future hoped-for, expected, and feared selves in the social class domain, and also are reflective of support of traditional American cultural values. Further, we show that these social class possible selves are predicted by family social class background, and that they motivate behavior in domains related to social class. We also provide evidence that family social class predicts the efficaciousness and temporal distance of these selves, and that people feel expected social class possible selves are the most attainable, most likely to come true, and closest to the current selves. Finally, we show experimental evidence suggesting that the family social class effect on the likelihood that social class possible selves will come true and their temporal distance can be attenuated by beliefs in social mobility. The current research ultimately provides important evidence on the large impact that family social class has on driving people's hopes, expectations, and fears for the future in the social class domain.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c (Part 1)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Family SC	0.00	0.87	-								
2. Current SC	-0.40	0.79	0.59***	-							
3. SC Identity	3.10	1.16	0.55***	0.68***	-						
4. HPS	1.04	0.85	0.37***	0.46***	0.39***	-					
5. EPS	0.24	0.90	0.46***	0.58***	0.48***	0.68***	-				
6. FPS	-1.36	0.89	0.38***	0.41***	0.35***	0.20***	0.37***	-			
7. HPS-Capable	4.97	1.52	0.14	0.23**	0.15†	0.05	0.38***	0.20*	-		
8. EPS-Capable	6.07	1.03	0.14	0.17†	0.09	0.14	0.14	0.16†	0.53***	-	
9. FPS-Capable	5.59	1.51	0.10	0.09	0.14	0.01	0.08	0.22*	0.39***	0.39***	-
10. HPS-Likely	4.48	1.65	0.13	0.21*	0.12	-0.02	0.4***	0.26**	0.85***	0.43***	0.33***
11. EPS-Likely	5.69	1.11	0.04	0.05	-0.03	-0.03	0.05	0.06	0.28**	0.66***	0.26**
12. FPS-Likely	4.88	1.69	0.15	0.10	-0.01	0.25**	0.26**	0.01	0.38***	0.34***	0.19*
13. HPS-Distance	5.83	1.26	-0.21*	-0.31***	-0.17*	0.06	-0.20*	-0.30***	-0.36***	-0.13	0.00
14. EPS-Distance	4.17	1.72	-0.10	-0.09	0.05	0.08	0.33***	-0.01	0.07	-0.28**	0.03
15. FPS-Distance	4.08	1.99	0.19*	0.22*	0.06	0.10	0.12	0.15†	0.07	0.20*	0.06
16. SMB	4.81	1.25	0.11†	0.31***	0.28***	0.32***	0.4***	0.18**	-	-	-
17. BSL	3.37	1.18	0.16**	0.28***	0.24***	0.2***	0.32***	0.18**	0.20*	0.03	0.03
18. Col-SE	4.51	1.15	0.37***	0.51***	0.54***	0.3***	0.36***	0.21***	0.23**	0.35***	0.20*
19. Col-II	3.34	1.37	0.19**	0.18**	0.16**	0.19**	0.16**	0.17**	0.06	0.00	-0.13
20. Optimism	3.43	0.91	0.31***	0.38***	0.13	0.28**	0.32***	0.14	0.38***	0.39***	0.17†

Table 1 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c (Part 2)

Item	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
10. HPS-Likely	-									
11. EPS-Likely	0.34***	-								
12. FPS-Likely	0.30***	0.25**	-							
13. HPS-Distance	-0.39***	-0.10	-0.22*	-						
14. EPS-Distance	0.10	-0.32***	-0.12	0.34***	-					
15. FPS-Distance	0.07	0.15†	0.51***	-0.29***	-0.25**	-				
16. SMB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
17. BSL	0.20*	-0.08	0.18*	-0.19*	-0.03	0.10	0.69***	-		
18. Col-SE	0.14	0.22*	0.21*	-0.10	-0.11	0.25**	0.45***	0.27***	-	
19. Col-II	0.02	-0.16†	-0.06	-0.14	-0.02	0.14	0.04	0.10	0.17**	-
20. Optimism	0.36***	0.28**	0.31***	-0.25**	-0.16†	0.18*	-	0.08	0.56***	0.03

Note: SC = social class; HPS = hoped-for social class possible self; EPS = expected possible self; FPS = feared social class possible self; SMB = social mobility beliefs; BSL = beliefs in system legitimacy; Col-SE = composite of collective social class membership self-esteem, public self-esteem, and private self-esteem; Col-II = collective social class importance to identity. Some correlations are missing because Optimism, Capable, Likely, and Time measures were only in Study 1a and SMB was only in Studies 1b and 1c.

† $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 2 (Part 1)

Item	$M_{Wave 1}$	$SD_{Wave 1}$	$M_{Wave 2}$	$SD_{Wave 2}$	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family SC	0.01	0.87	0.16	0.81	-	0.81***	0.35***	0.34***	0.27***	0.28***
2. SC Identity	3.92	1.22	4.07	1.12	0.82***	-	0.29***	0.3***	0.25***	0.23***
3. HPS-General	0.78	0.79	0.79	0.82	0.40***	0.21*	-	0.78***	0.51***	0.45***
4. EPS-General	0.35	0.85	0.29	0.88	0.39***	0.24*	0.85***	-	0.48***	0.57***
5. HPS-Post-Grad	-0.41	0.80	-0.42	0.79	0.28**	0.19†	0.59***	0.51***	-	0.85***
6. EPS-Post-Grad	-0.73	0.83	-0.75	0.85	0.39***	0.25*	0.58***	0.66***	0.86***	-
7. Grad Year	-	-	7.33	0.69	0.15	-0.04	0.15	0.10	0.17	0.09
8. App Count	-	-	3.58	2.80	0.18†	0.17	0.22*	0.29**	0.26*	0.36***
9. Job Count	-	-	1.27	2.34	-0.19†	-0.19†	0.06	0.09	0.19†	0.25*
10. Intern Count	-	-	1.13	2.35	0.38***	0.30**	0.18†	0.11	0.24*	0.22*
11. Grad Count	-	-	0.40	1.47	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.18†	-0.12	0.03
12. Other Count	-	-	0.78	1.05	-0.15	-0.17†	-0.10	-0.17†	-0.29**	-0.43***
13. Effort	-	-	4.82	1.34	-0.03	0.07	-0.06	0.02	-0.11	-0.11
14. Wanting	-	-	5.53	1.08	-0.14	-0.04	-0.09	-0.05	-0.11	-0.15
15. App Prestige	-	-	66.76	20.24	0.08	0.12	0.24*	0.29**	0.23*	0.27**
16. App Wages	-	-	19.54	17.14	0.12	0.06	0.30**	0.21†	0.44***	0.53***

Table 2 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 2 (Part 2)

Item	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
7. Grad Year	-								
8. App Count	-0.18†	-							
9. Job Count	-0.43***	0.40***	-						
10. Intern Count	0.48***	0.43***	-0.41***	-					
11. Grad Count	-0.47***	0.36***	-0.09	-0.19†	-				
12. Other Count	0.23*	-0.32**	-0.27**	-0.24*	-0.20*	-			
13. Effort	-0.24*	0.13	-0.19†	0.00	0.46***	-0.02	-		
14. Wanting	-0.15	-0.07	-0.29**	-0.09	0.36***	0.17	0.72***	-	
15. App Prestige	-0.15	0.39***	0.08	0.08	0.45***	-0.3**	0.42***	0.29**	-
16. App Wages	-0.12	0.52***	0.51***	0.24*	-0.09	-0.53***	-0.26*	-0.45***	0.21*

Note: SC = social class. HPS-General = hoped-for social class possible self in general future; EPS-General = expected possible self in general future; HPS-Post-Grad = hoped-for social class possible self, one year post-graduation; EPS-Post-Grad = expected social class possible self, one year post-graduation. Grad Year = graduation year (years since 2010); App = application. Above the diagonal are Wave 1 correlations and below the diagonal are Wave 2 between-subjects correlations (within-subjects variance is partialled out for effort, wanting, app prestige, and app wages). Wave 2 means and standard deviations are between-subjects.

† $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 3 (Part 1)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Family SC	0.00	0.87								
2. Current SC	-0.64	0.72	0.78***							
3. SC Identity	4.07	1.20	0.79***	0.70***						
4. SM Manip Check	4.76	1.85	-0.03	-0.03	-0.06					
5. Manip Believability	5.48	1.15	0.06	0.03	0.09†	-0.11*				
6. HPS	1.59	0.79	0.36***	0.41***	0.34***	-0.02	0.18***			
7. EPS	0.92	0.87	0.39***	0.46***	0.39***	0.00	0.18***	0.76***		
8. FPS	-0.77	0.86	0.28***	0.33***	0.24***	-0.04	0.02	0.31***	0.38***	
9. HPS-Capable	5.34	1.14	0.06	0.06	0.09†	0.02	0.08	0.09†	0.31***	0.1†
10. EPS-Capable	5.81	0.97	0.13*	0.18**	0.17***	0.03	0.09†	0.21***	0.24***	0.12*
11. FPS-Capable	5.67	1.29	0.12*	0.01	0.09†	-0.01	0.10*	0.08	0.15**	0.01
12. HPS-Likely	4.87	1.28	0.03	0.05	0.06	-0.04	0.05	0.06	0.31***	0.13*
13. EPS-Likely	5.60	0.98	0.17***	0.22***	0.14**	0.04	0.12*	0.27***	0.33***	0.08
14. FPS-Likely	5.23	1.45	0.09†	0.13*	0.11*	0.02	0.07	0.02	0.10*	-0.23***
15. HPS-Distance	5.80	1.29	-0.03	-0.08	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.19***	-0.06	0.02
16. EPS-Distance	4.91	1.46	0.02	-0.09	0.04	-0.01	0.01	0.16**	0.18***	0.11*
17. FPS-Distance	5.02	1.90	0.05	0.11*	0.14**	0.03	-0.06	0.04	0.15**	-0.02

Table 3 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 3 (Part 2)

Item	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
10. EPS-Capable	0.53***							
11. FPS-Capable	0.16**	0.25***						
12. HPS-Likely	0.72***	0.39***	0.13*					
13. EPS-Likely	0.40***	0.61***	0.23***	0.57***				
14. FPS-Likely	0.19***	0.17***	0.18***	0.17**	0.16**			
15. HPS-Distance	-0.27***	-0.04	0.06	-0.26***	-0.03	-0.13*		
16. EPS-Distance	-0.05	-0.14**	0.09†	-0.02	-0.12*	-0.05	0.56***	
17. FPS-Distance	0.15**	0.17***	0.11*	0.13*	0.11*	0.34***	-0.15**	0.01

Note: SC = social class; HPS = hoped-for social class possible self; EPS = expected possible self; FPS = feared social class possible self; SM = social mobility; Manip = Manipulation.

† $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 4 (Part 1)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family SC	0.00	0.83	-					
2. Current SC	-0.22	0.80	0.53***	-				
3. SC Identity	3.27	1.09	0.45***	0.73***	-			
4. HPS	1.49	0.78	0.13†	0.28***	0.10	-		
5. EPS	0.73	0.84	0.37***	0.55***	0.38***	0.53***	-	
6. FPS	-0.49	0.89	0.30***	0.53***	0.43***	0.01	0.36***	-
7. Cultural Current	3.06	0.65	0.24**	0.52***	0.40***	0.04	0.33***	0.35***
8. Cultural HPS	3.70	0.73	-0.02	0.09	-0.02	0.20*	0.06	-0.10
9. Cultural EPS	3.43	0.75	0.14†	0.33***	0.16*	0.26**	0.39***	0.06
10. Cultural FPS	2.19	0.97	0.25**	0.47***	0.35***	-0.01	0.30***	0.54***

Table 4 (Continued)

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 4 (Part 2)

Item	7	8	9
8. Cultural HPS	0.32***	-	
9. Cultural EPS	0.51***	0.66***	-
10. Cultural FPS	0.52***	0.00	0.16*

Note: SC = social class; HPS = hoped-for social class possible self; EPS = expected possible self; FPS = feared social class possible self. † $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Study 5

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Financial Comfort	3.98	2.47					
2. SSS	5.03	2.08	0.68***				
3. Cultural Current	3.00	0.77	0.36***	0.45***			
4. Cultural HPS	3.51	0.92	0.20**	0.20**	0.36***		
5. Cultural EPS	3.19	0.94	0.32***	0.35***	0.54***	0.64***	
6. Cultural FPS	2.07	0.93	0.15*	0.24***	0.41***	0.16*	0.45***

Note: SSS = subjective socioeconomic status, HPS = hoped-for social class possible self; EPS = expected possible self; FPS = feared social class possible self. † $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix B: Figures

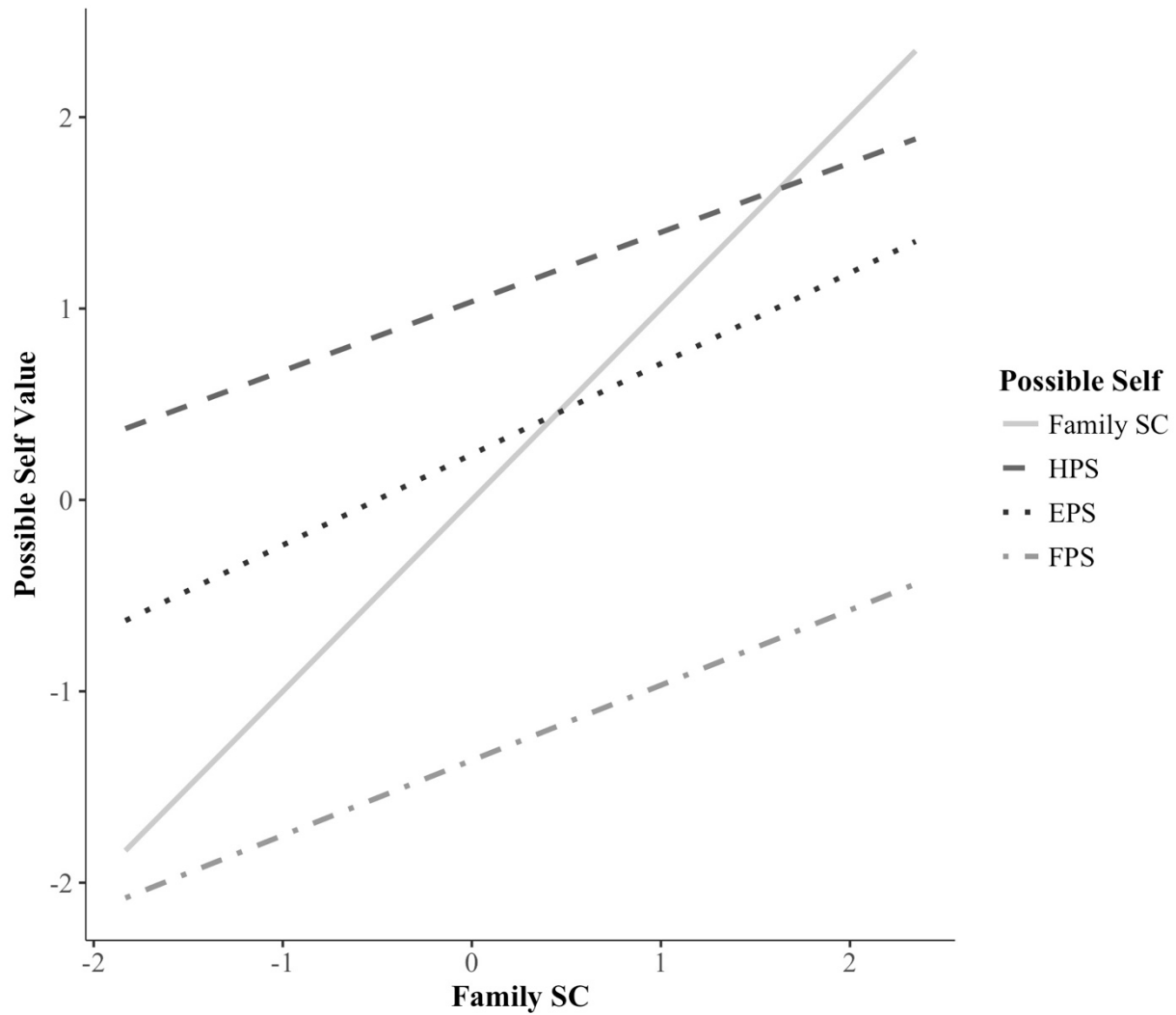


Figure 1. The effect of Family Social Class on Social Class Possible Selves (Study 1). SCPSs are centered on Family Social Class, the solid line, which is for reference only and is not included in the model. Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

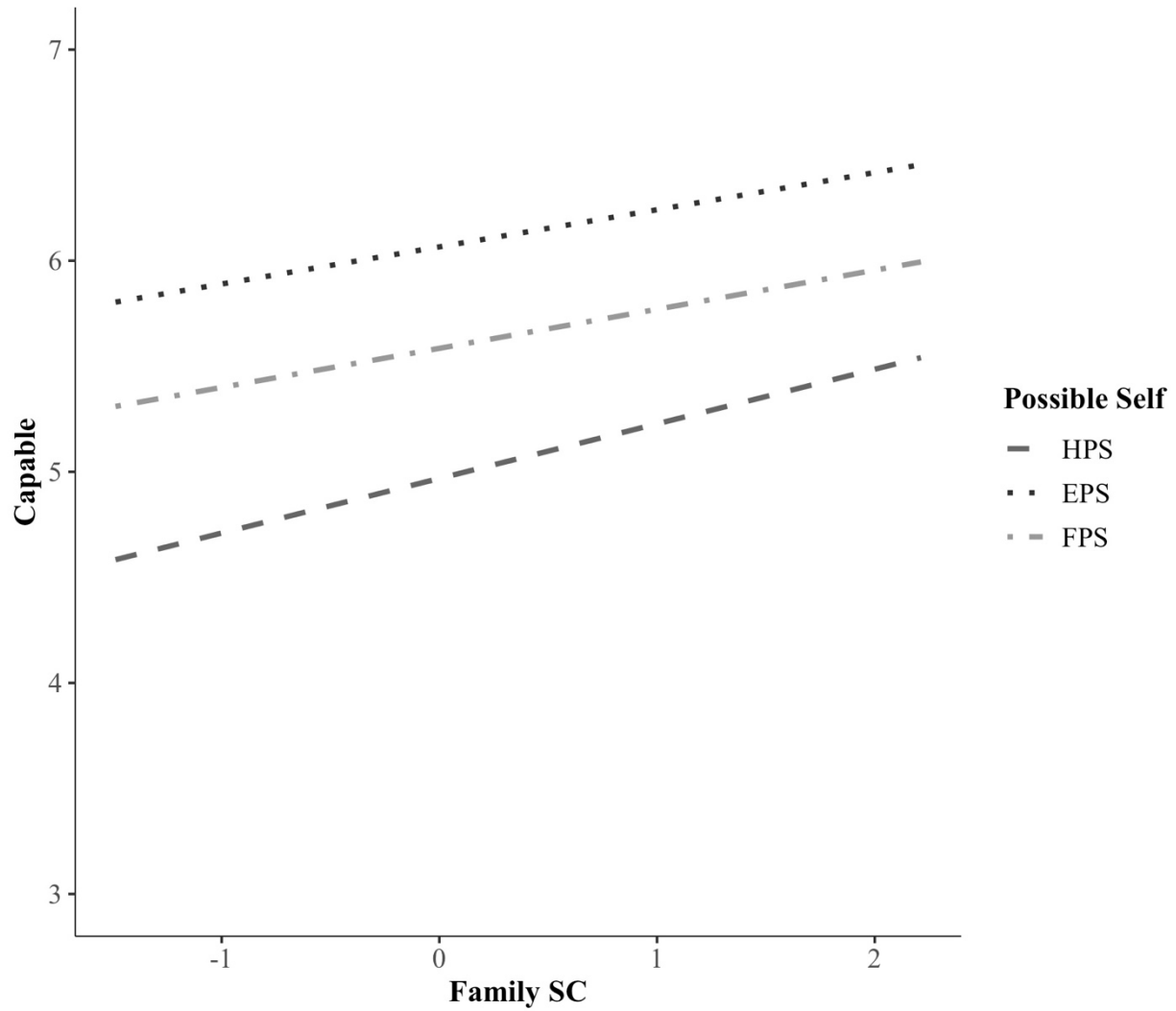


Figure 2. The effect of Family Social Class on Capability of Achieving HPS and EPS, and Capability of Avoiding FPS (Study 1). Capable is on a scale of 1 (*completely incapable*) to 7 (*completely capable*). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

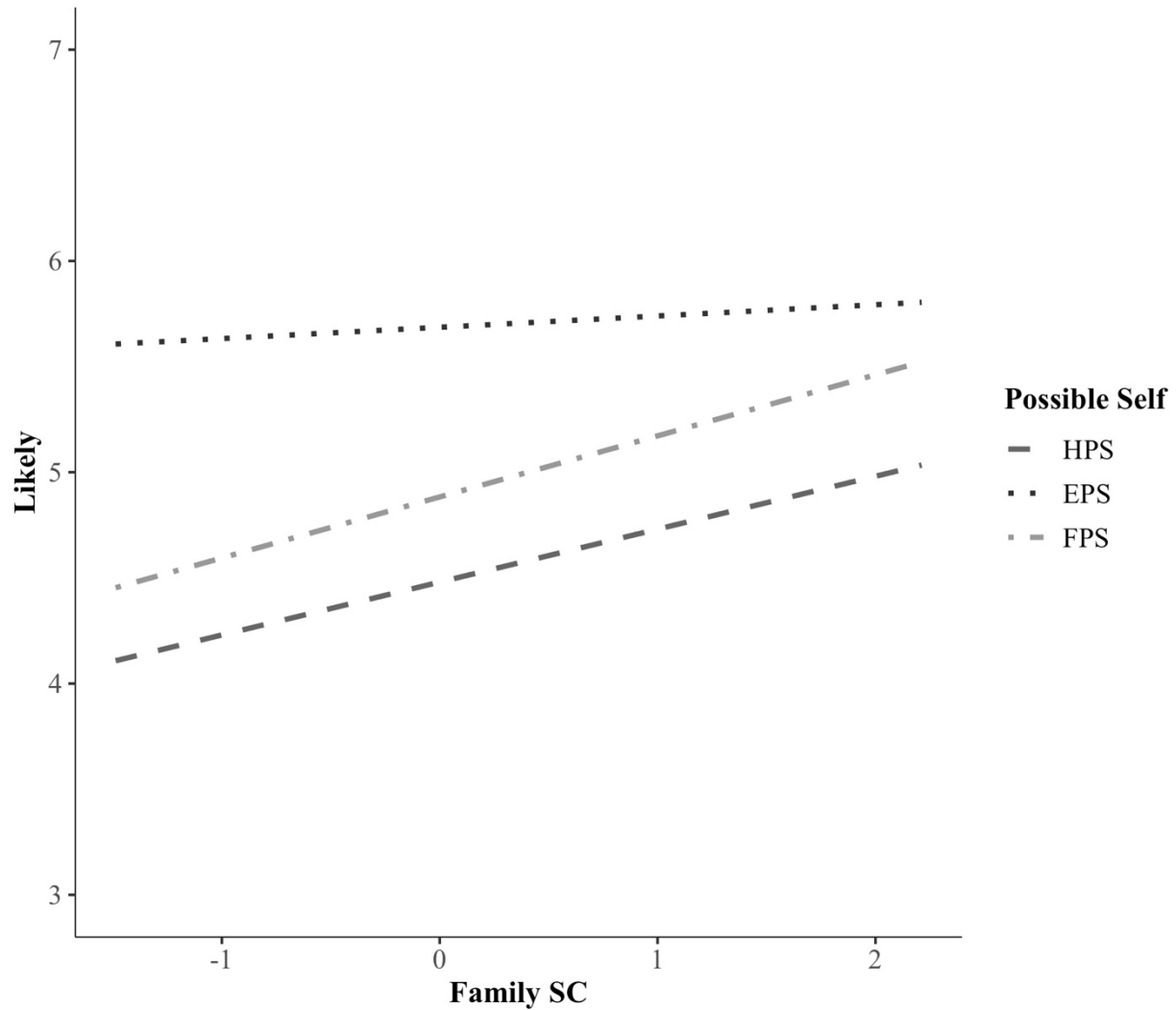


Figure 3. The effect of Family Social Class on how Likely it is that HPS and EPS will come true, and FPS will not come true (Study 1). Likely is on a scale of 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*), with FPS reverse-scored. Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

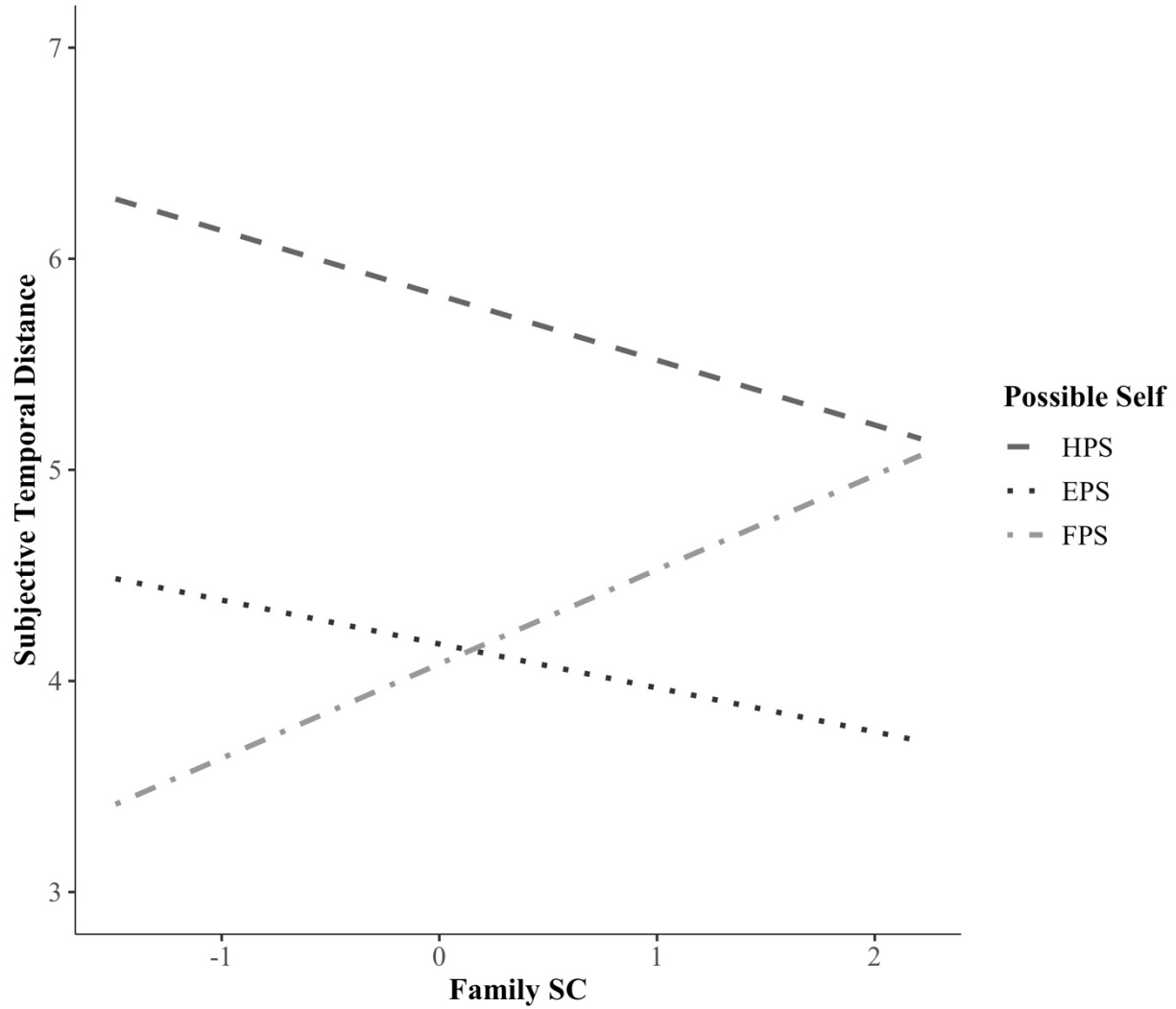


Figure 4. The effect of Family Social Class on the Subjective Temporal Distance of SCPSs (Study 1). Subjective Temporal Distance is scaled from 1 (*feels like tomorrow*) to 7 (*feels far away*). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

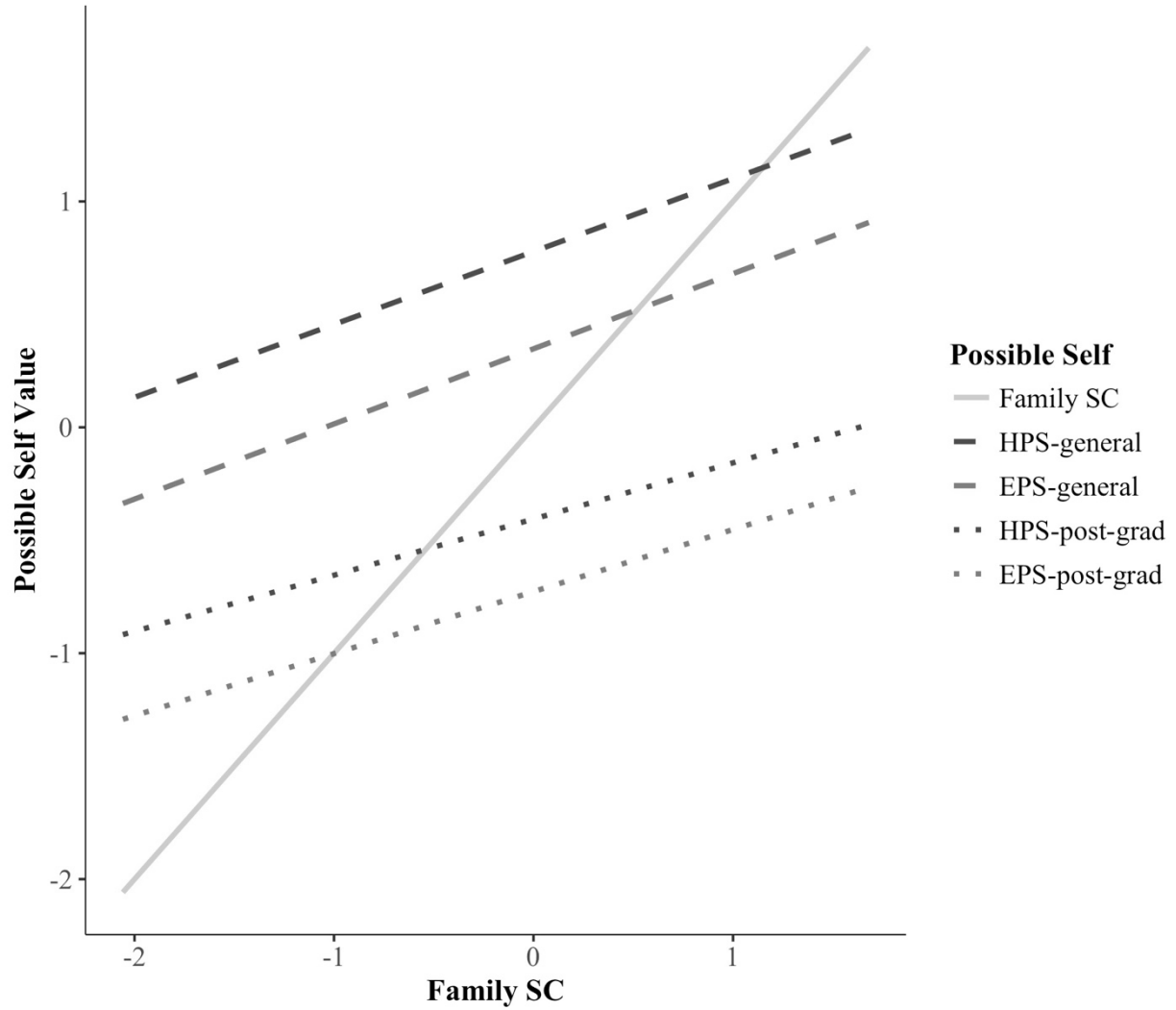


Figure 5. The effect of Family Social Class on Social Class Possible Selves (Study 2). SCPSs are centered on Family Social Class, the solid line, which is for reference only and is not included in the model. Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

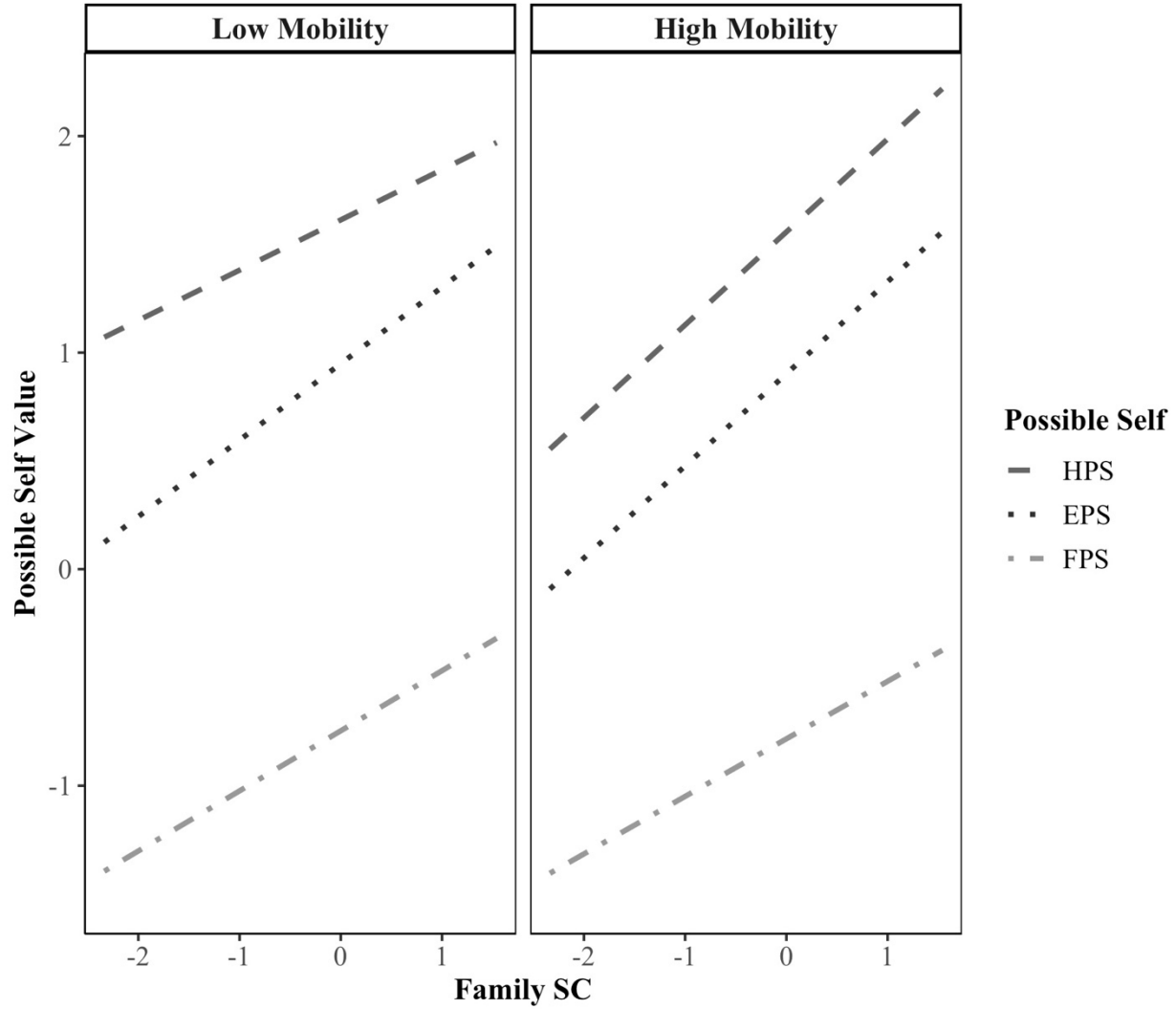


Figure 6. The effect of Family Social Class on Social Class Possible Selves by Social Mobility Conditions (Study 3). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank. SCPSs are centered on Family Social Class.

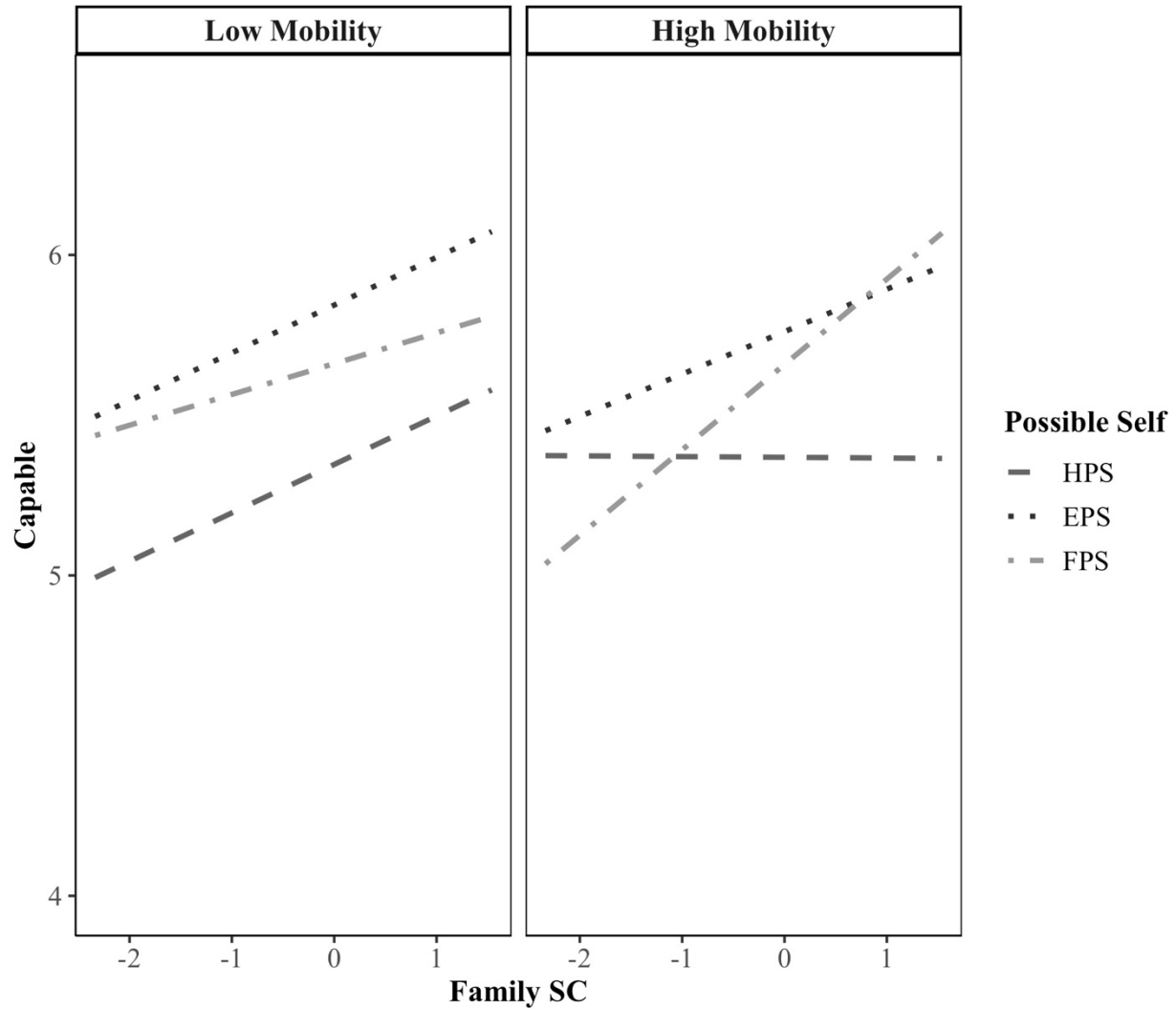


Figure 7. The effect of Family Social Class on Capability of Achieving HPS and EPS, and Capability of Avoiding FPS by Social Mobility Conditions (Study 3). Capable is on a scale of 1 (*completely incapable*) to 7 (*completely capable*). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

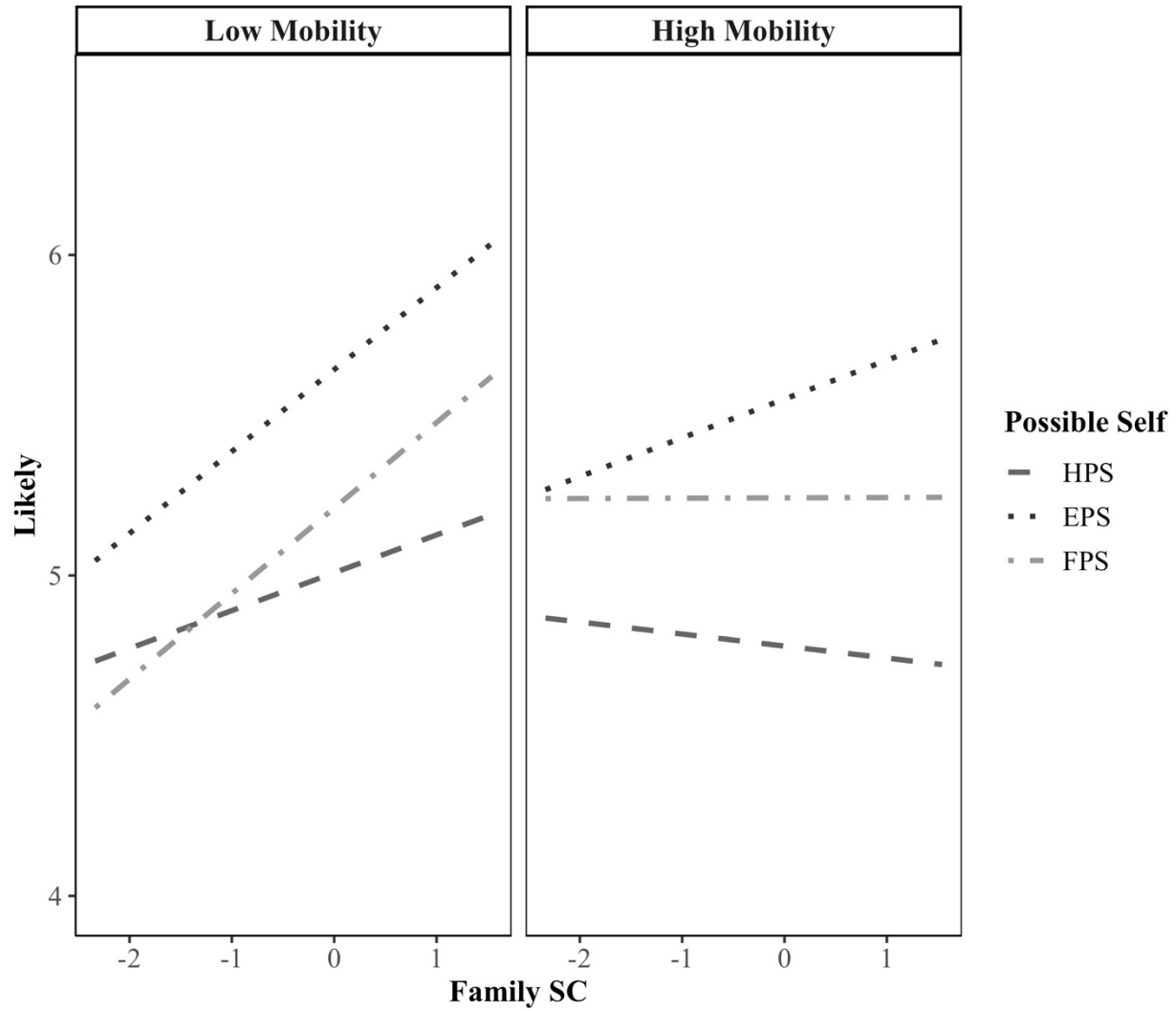


Figure 8. The effect of Family Social Class on how Likely it is that HPS and EPS will come true, and FPS will not come true by Social Mobility Condition (Study 3). Likely is on a scale of 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*), with FPS reverse-scored. Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

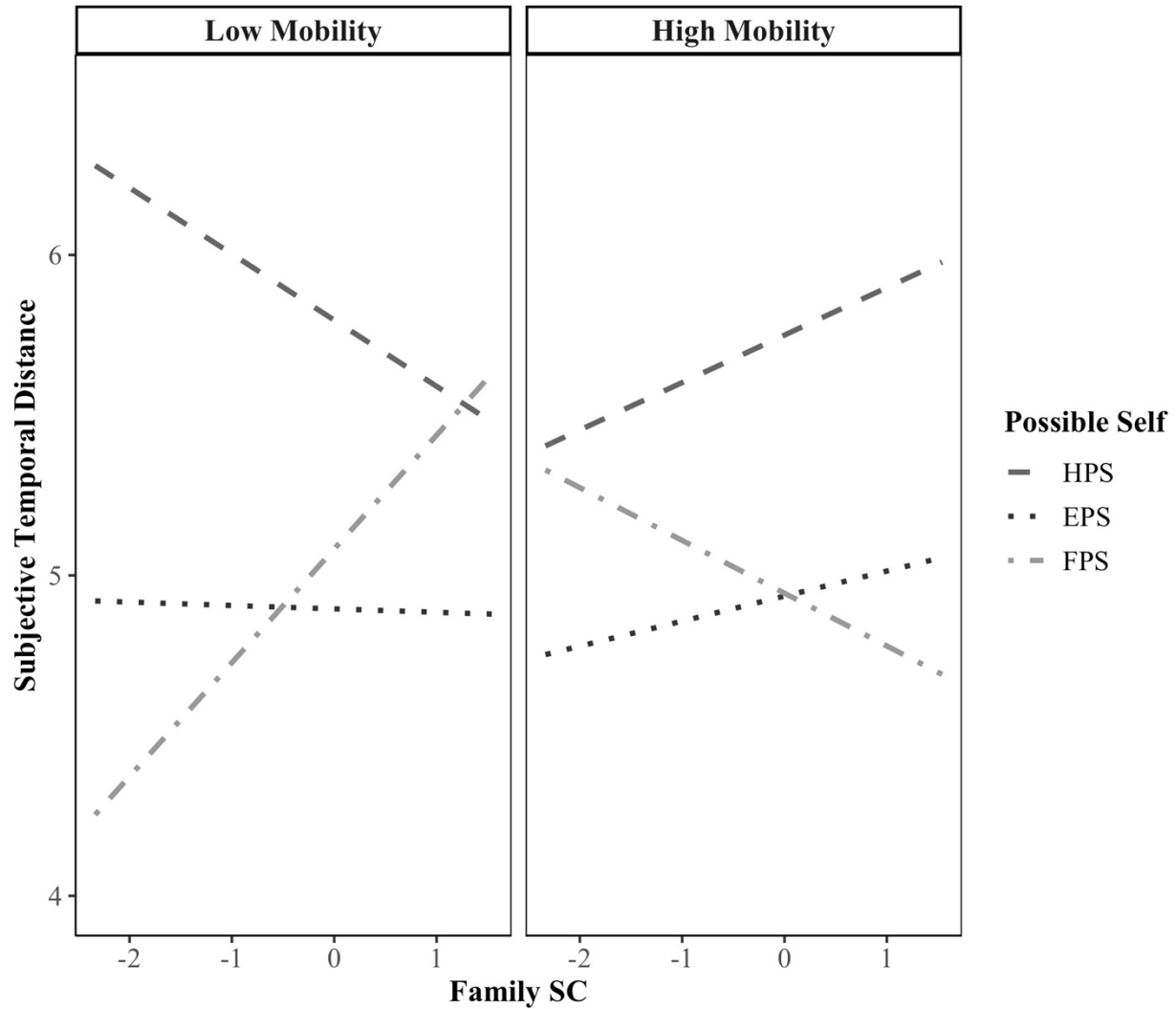


Figure 9. The effect of Family Social Class on the Subjective Temporal Distance of SCPSs by Social Mobility Condition (Study 3). Subjective Temporal Distance is scaled from 1 (*feels like tomorrow*) to 7 (*feels far away*). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

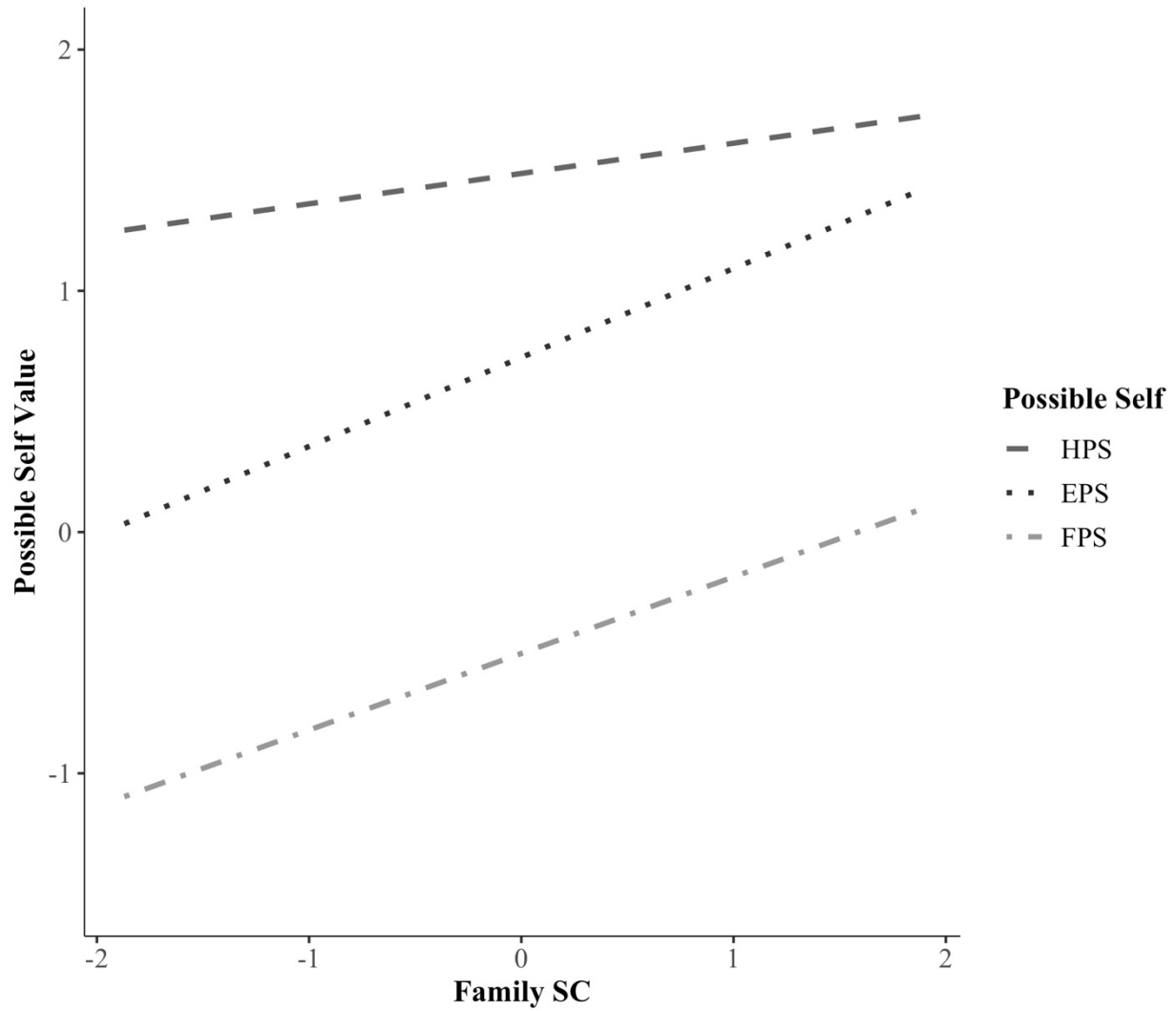


Figure 10. The effect of Family Social Class on Social Class Possible Selves (Study 4). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank. SCPSs are centered on Family Social Class.

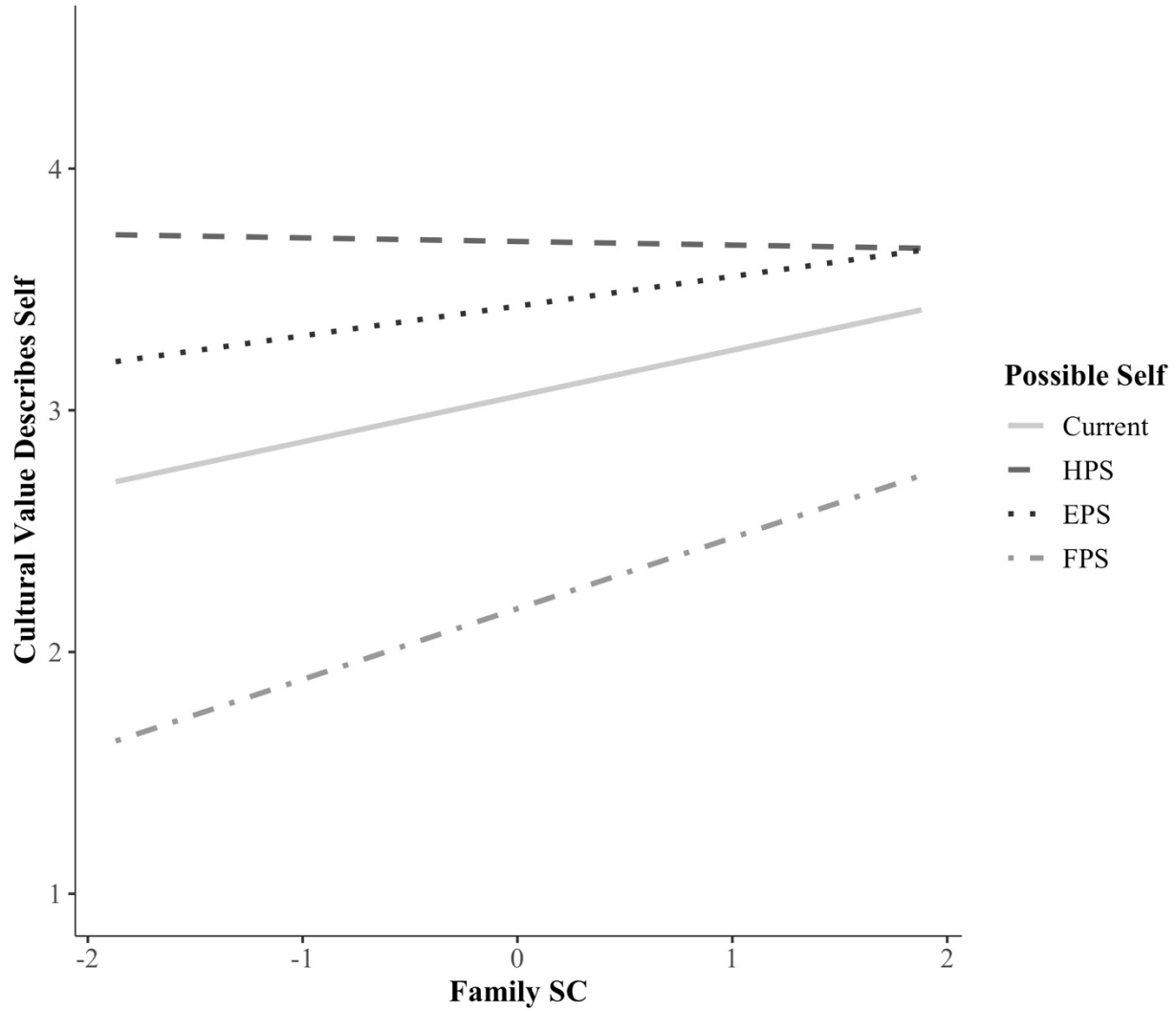


Figure 11. The effect of Family Social Class on Cultural Values for each Current and Possible Selves (Study 4). Cultural Values are on a scale of scale of 1 (*does not describe my [current self/ HPS/ EPS / FPS]*) to 5 (*describes my [current self/ HPS/ EPS / FPS extremely well]*). Family Social Class is a z-scored composite measure of parent job prestige, income, and social class rank.

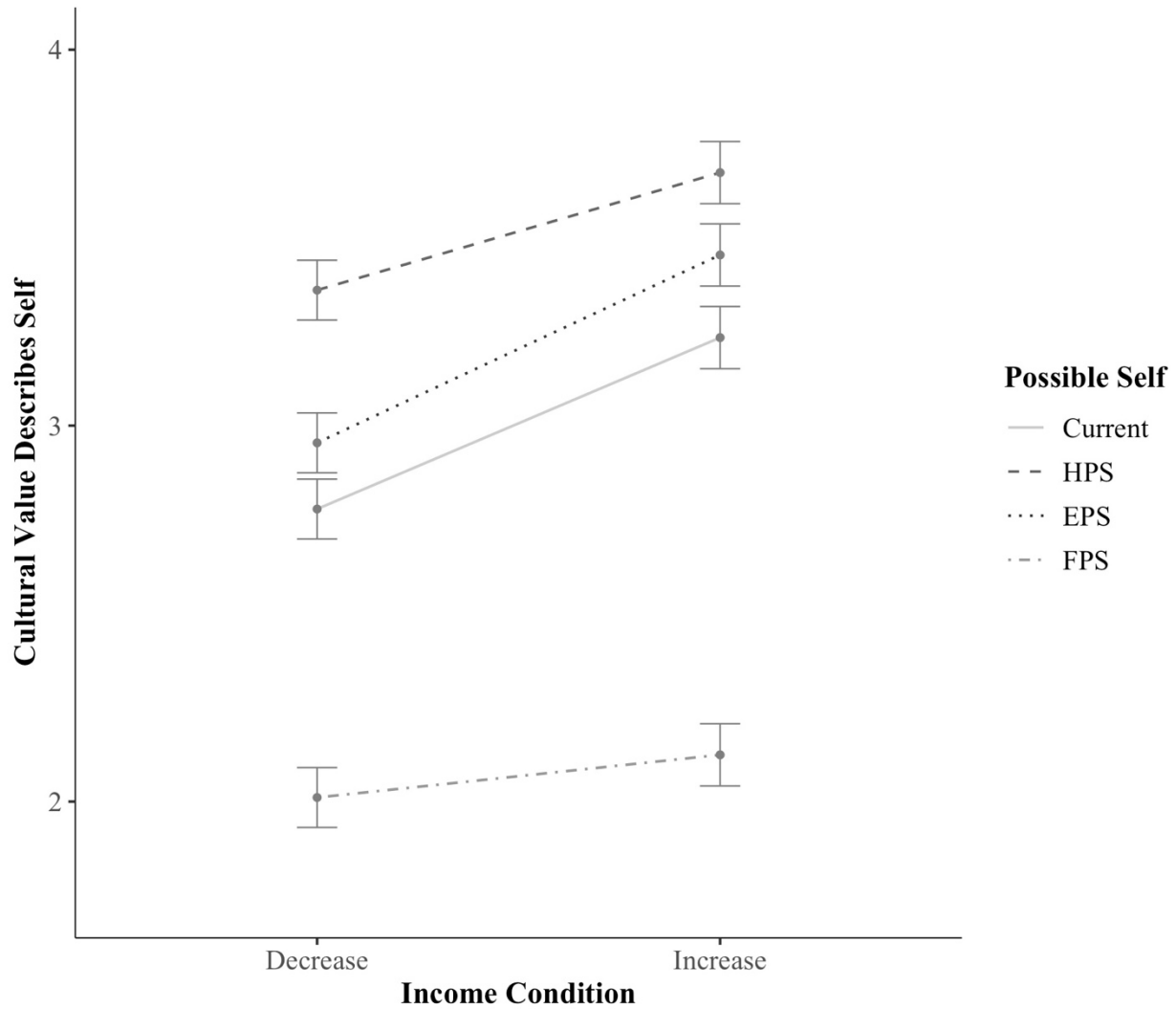


Figure 12. The effect of Income Condition on Cultural Values for each Current and Possible Selves (Study 5). Cultural Values are on a scale of scale of 1 (*does not describe my [current self/ HPS/ EPS / FPS]*) to 5 (*describes my [current self/ HPS/ EPS / FPS extremely well]*). Error bars represent +/- 1 SE.

Appendix C: Study 3 Experimental Materials

Study 3 High Mobility Article:

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS, POLITICS & SOCIETY, RESEARCH

Berkeley among top universities for upward mobility

A new social mobility report card for U.S. colleges and universities reveals high rankings for California schools, from community colleges to the University of California, including UC Berkeley. The report shows UC Berkeley ranks among the top in upward mobility and student economic diversity.



Berkeley economists Emmanuel Saez and Danny Yagan (UC Berkeley photos)

Two UC Berkeley economists, Danny Yagan and Emmanuel Saez, are among the authors of the Equality of Opportunity Project's report card. They worked alongside economists Raj Chetty of Stanford University and John N. Friedman of Brown University and with Nicholas Turner of the U.S. Treasury Department.

The report is based on publicly available statistics for all students ages 18-22 enrolled in each college from 1999 to 2013, including the students' earnings while in their early 30s and their parents' incomes.

Highlights of their research on UC Berkeley include:

- UC Berkeley is the No. 1 college in the nation in terms of the number of students who come from families in the bottom fifth and end up having earnings in the top 1 percent.
- Approximately 4.9% of UC Berkeley graduates come from poor families but become wealthy adults, one of the highest proportions in the nation.
- 22% of UC Berkeley graduates moved up by two or more wealth quintiles.
- 60% of UC Berkeley graduates end up in the top 20%, one of the highest proportions in the nation and among highly selective schools.

The research that led to the mobility report card was funded by the Russell Sage Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Center for Equitable Growth at UC Berkeley, and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation.

Study 3 Low Mobility Article:

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS, POLITICS & SOCIETY, RESEARCH

Berkeley stagnating in upward mobility

A new social mobility report card for U.S. colleges and universities reveals high rankings for California schools, from community colleges to the University of California, including UC Berkeley. The report shows UC Berkeley is stagnating in upward mobility owing partially to a lack of student economic diversity.



Berkeley economists Emmanuel Saez and Danny Yagan (UC Berkeley photos)

Two UC Berkeley economists, Danny Yagan and Emmanuel Saez, are among the authors of the Equality of Opportunity Project's report card. They worked alongside economists Raj Chetty of Stanford University and John N. Friedman of Brown University and with Nicholas Turner of the U.S. Treasury Department.

The report is based on publicly available statistics for all students ages 18-22 enrolled in each college from 1999 to 2013, including the students' earnings while in their early 30s and their parents' incomes.

Highlights of their research on UC Berkeley include:

- Since 2000, the fraction of students from low-income families at the Ivy-plus colleges barely increased, while access at some institutions such as UC Berkeley and State University of New York at Stony Brook fell sharply.
- Only 4.9% of UC Berkeley graduates come from poor families but become wealthy adults, leaving Berkeley below the national average on this dimension.
- Only 7.3% of UC Berkeley's population is comprised of students from the bottom 20% wealth quintile, and later in life 9.7% of Berkeley graduates are still in the bottom 20%.
- 54% of UC Berkeley students come from the top 20% wealth quintile, a reflection of low economic diversity in the student population.

The research that led to the mobility report card was funded by the Russell Sage Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Center for Equitable Growth at UC Berkeley, and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation.