

Repositório ISCTE-IUL

Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2018-04-19

Deposited version:

Post-print

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Newheiser, A.-K., Barreto, M. & Tiemersma, J. (2017). People like me don't belong here: identity concealment is associated with negative workplace experiences. *Journal of Social Issues*. 73 (2), 341-358

Further information on publisher's website:

[10.1111/josi.12220](https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12220)

Publisher's copyright statement:

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Newheiser, A.-K., Barreto, M. & Tiemersma, J. (2017). People like me don't belong here: identity concealment is associated with negative workplace experiences. *Journal of Social Issues*. 73 (2), 341-358, which has been published in final form at <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/josi.12220>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the Publisher's Terms and Conditions for self-archiving.

Use policy

Creative Commons CC BY 4.0

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in the Repository
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

People Like Me Don't Belong Here: Identity Concealment Is Associated with Negative
Workplace Experiences

Anna-Kaisa Newheiser

University at Albany, State University of New York

Manuela Barreto

University of Exeter and Lisbon University Institute (CIS/ISCTE-IUL)

Jasper Tiemersma

Nuffic, The Hague, Netherlands

Author Note

Anna-Kaisa Newheiser, Department of Psychology, University at Albany, SUNY;
Manuela Barreto, School of Psychology, University of Exeter and Lisbon University Institute
(CIS/ISCTE-IUL); Jasper Tiemersma, Nuffic, The Hague, Netherlands.

Anna Newheiser and Manuela Barreto contributed equally to this article. Study 1 was
conducted as part of Jasper Tiemersma's MSc thesis, completed at Leiden University.

Please address correspondence regarding this research to Anna Newheiser, Department of
Psychology, University at Albany, SUNY, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222, USA,
or Manuela Barreto, School of Psychology, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4QG, UK. Email
addresses: anewheiser@albany.edu and m.barreto@exeter.ac.uk.

Abstract

In two studies, we examined the impact of concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity in the context of a recalled or imagined social interaction with one's coworkers. We propose that although people may choose to conceal stigmatized identities in order to increase their chances of acceptance and belonging, identity concealment in fact reduces feelings of belonging and results in negative work-related outcomes. Participants possessing a concealable stigmatized identity (in Study 1: LGB identity, $N=95$; in Study 2, LGBT identity, history of mental illness, history of physical illness, or history of poverty, $N=303$) were randomly assigned to recall or imagine concealing or revealing their identity at work. We found that concealing (vs. revealing) the identity reduced felt belonging in the recalled or imagined situation, collective self-esteem, job satisfaction, and work-related commitment. Thus, despite its promise to protect individuals against workplace discrimination, identity concealment is associated with deleterious outcomes.

Keywords: Stigma, identity concealment, belonging, job satisfaction, work commitment

People Like Me Don't Belong Here: Identity Concealment Is Associated with Negative
Workplace Experiences

Individuals living with stigmatized identities are routinely targeted with bias. When one's identity is concealable, the decision to reveal it to others is thus particularly consequential. Keeping the identity concealed is a common identity management strategy whose primary value lies in its promise to protect the individual against devaluation (Jones et al., 1984). To be effective, however, this strategy must not only deliver on its key promise; it must do so without causing further psychological or social costs to the individual. In the present research, we examined the impact of identity concealment in the context of a recalled or imagined social interaction in the workplace. We propose that although people may choose to conceal stigmatized identities to increase their chances of acceptance and belonging (see also Newheiser & Barreto, 2014), identity concealment in fact *reduces* feelings of belonging, ultimately resulting in negative work-related outcomes (e.g., lower job satisfaction and commitment).

Hiding a stigmatized identity can be psychologically and socially costly (Barreto, Ellemers, & Banal, 2006; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). For example, concealment is associated with negative affect, anxiety, and depression (Frable, Platt, & Hoey, 1998; Ryan, Legate, Weinstein, & Rahman, in press) and an elevated risk of physical and mental illness (Cole, Kemeny, Taylor, & Visscher, 1996; Meyer, 2003). Especially relevant to the present research, concealing a stigmatized identity at work is associated with lower job satisfaction, lower affective organizational commitment, and greater job-related anxiety (e.g., Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers, 2011; see also Lyons, Zatzick, Thompson, & Bushe, in press). Thus, there is reason to believe that identity disclosure affords important

benefits to employees living with stigmatized identities, despite the fact that disclosure can also make them vulnerable to workplace discrimination.

Due to its correlational nature, prior work on this topic has not addressed direction of causality. The association between identity concealment and workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction is in fact likely to be bidirectional. For instance, employees experiencing a negative work environment are plausibly less likely to reveal their stigmatized identities at work. Thus, workplace outcomes may impact the likelihood of concealment. Consistent with this possibility, research investigating identity concealment among transgender employees has underscored the association between positive interpersonal relationships with one's coworkers and positive outcomes such as job satisfaction (Law et al., 2011; Ruggs, Martinez, Hebl, & Law, 2015; see also Wessel, in press). However, it is important to also examine whether identity concealment can affect workplace outcomes. As such, we randomly assigned participants to recall or imagine an experience of concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work and subsequently assessed felt belonging, job satisfaction, and work-related commitment. This strategy allowed us to begin to provide evidence for the possibility that identity concealment may cause people to feel that their workplace experiences may be negative.

In addition, we sought to examine a potential reason why concealing a stigmatized identity may be associated with deleterious outcomes, relative to revealing the identity. Prior research has shown that concealing a stigmatized identity from an interaction partner reduces felt belonging (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). We thus hypothesized that employees who recall or imagine concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work experience low belonging in the recalled or imagined situation, and that this reduced belonging has a negative impact on job satisfaction and work-related commitment. We tested these hypotheses in two studies.

Study 1

In Study 1, we investigated the impact of recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity at work. LGB employees regularly experience workplace discrimination (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). LGB employees who disclose their identities thus risk having to contend with bias. At the same time, disclosing one's sexual orientation at work is associated with a variety of positive outcomes such as greater job satisfaction (Ellis & Riggle, 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Whether to reveal one's LGB identity at work is therefore a highly consequential decision.

Study 1 tested the hypothesis that recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity at work reduces felt belonging, with belonging operationalized in two ways. First, we assessed the extent to which participants felt like they personally belonged during the situation they recalled. Second, we measured participants' perceptions of the extent to which their coworkers value LGB individuals (i.e., public collective self-esteem; Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990). In addition to creating psychological distance from coworkers, LGB identity concealment may expose LGB individuals to negative comments about their ingroup (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009), which may decrease perceived collective self-esteem. Thus, lack of belonging may be experienced at both individual and group-based levels of identity definition.

We also examined how recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity at work affects job satisfaction and work-related commitment, expecting to observe a negative impact of identity concealment on these outcomes. Accordingly, lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants were randomly assigned to recall a situation in which they either concealed or revealed their sexual orientation at work, and then completed measures of positive and negative affect, felt belonging, collective self-esteem, job satisfaction, and work commitment. We predicted that

recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity would reduce positive affect, felt belonging in the recalled situation, collective self-esteem, job satisfaction, and commitment. We also predicted that felt belonging and collective self-esteem would mediate the effect of recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity on job satisfaction and work commitment.

Method

Participants. Ninety-five Dutch lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants (46 women and 49 men) were recruited via an online community maintained by COC Nederland, the largest LGBT rights organization in the Netherlands. Participants reported their age by indicating which category included their age (range: 18-24 years old to 51-64 years old). Participants worked in a variety of fields (e.g., healthcare, education, government, non-profits). Median self-reported income was €30,001-€40,000/year (range: less than €5,000 to more than €50,000/year). Seventy-eight percent of participants had completed university-level or professional training. We assessed the extent to which participants were open about their sexual orientation “at work” and “in general” (Waldo, 1999; 1=*not open; almost no one knows* to 7=*completely open; almost everyone knows*). The two items were strongly correlated, $r(93)=.60, p<.001$, and were averaged into a single index. Participants reported being fairly open about their sexual orientation ($M=5.08, SD=1.58$; no difference between conditions, $t[93]=1.59, p=.116, d=0.33$).

Procedure. A link to a study on “LGB experiences in the workplace” was posted on COC Nederland's website. Participants were entered into a prize draw for one of five €50 gift certificates as compensation. Participants were told the study examined job satisfaction among LGB individuals, specifically the implications of whether or not they revealed their sexual orientation at work, and were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In the Conceal condition ($N=46$), participants were asked to recall a situation in which they *knowingly*

concealed their sexual orientation at work. In the Reveal condition ($N=49$), participants were asked to recall a situation in which they *revealed* their sexual orientation at work. Participants were asked to recall how they felt in the situation or, if they had never experienced such a situation, to imagine how they would feel. Participants then completed key dependent measures.

Measures. All measures specifically referred to how participants felt during or based on the situation they recalled as part of the experimental manipulation. Participants responded on scales anchored at 1 (*definitely not*) and 7 (*certainly*), unless otherwise specified below.

Eleven items indexed felt *belonging* (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002; e.g., to what extent did this situation make you feel *personally accepted, welcome, isolated*; $\alpha=.94$). Eleven items assessed *positive affect* (e.g., “To what extent do you feel happy?”; $\alpha=.98$). Seven items assessed *anxiety* (e.g., “To what extent do you feel tense?”; $\alpha=.92$). Twelve items assessed *negative affect* (e.g., “To what extent do you feel depressed?”; $\alpha=.96$).

Eighteen items assessed three dimensions of work commitment (Ellemers, de Gilder, & Van den Heuvel, 1998). Seven items measured *commitment to one’s work team* (e.g., “I am prepared to do additional chores, when this benefits my team/department”; $\alpha=.84$). Five items measured *organizational commitment* (e.g., “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with the organization in which I work”; $\alpha=.80$). Six items measured *career-oriented commitment* (e.g., “My career is one of the most important things in my life”; $\alpha=.91$). Finally, 12 items measured *job satisfaction* (Price & Mueller, 1986; e.g., “I feel that I am happier at my job than most other people are at their jobs”; $\alpha=.91$) and 4 items measured *collective self-esteem* (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; e.g., “In general, my colleagues have a positive opinion of LGB people”; $\alpha=.89$; both 1=*totally disagree* to 7=*totally agree*).¹

Results

Positive and Negative Affect. Participants reported less positive affect in the Conceal condition ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.66$) than the Reveal condition ($M=5.09$, $SD=1.41$), $t(93)=4.38$, $p<.001$, $d=0.91$. Participants also reported more negative affect in the Conceal condition ($M=3.07$, $SD=1.44$) than the Reveal condition ($M=1.96$, $SD=1.30$), $t(93)=3.93$, $p<.001$, $d=0.82$. Similarly, participants reported more anxiety in the Conceal condition ($M=3.80$, $SD=1.54$) than the Reveal condition ($M=3.13$, $SD=1.57$), $t(93)=2.10$, $p=.039$, $d=0.44$. Recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity is thus an aversive experience.

Belonging. As hypothesized, participants reported less belonging in the Conceal condition ($M=4.47$, $SD=1.52$) than the Reveal condition ($M=5.48$, $SD=1.34$), $t(93)=3.42$, $p=.001$, $d=0.71$. Participants also reported lower collective self-esteem in the Conceal condition ($M=4.90$, $SD=1.45$) than the Reveal condition ($M=5.50$, $SD=1.13$), $t(93)=2.26$, $p=.026$, $d=0.47$.

Job Satisfaction and Work Commitment. As hypothesized, participants reported lower job satisfaction in the Conceal condition ($M=4.94$, $SD=1.13$) than the Reveal condition ($M=5.47$, $SD=0.97$), $t(93)=2.46$, $p=.016$, $d=0.51$. Participants also reported marginally lower team-oriented commitment in the Conceal condition ($M=5.03$, $SD=1.10$) than the Reveal condition ($M=5.41$, $SD=1.06$), $t(93)=1.72$, $p=.089$, $d=0.36$. There were no significant differences in organizational commitment ($M_{\text{Conceal}}=3.57$ vs. $M_{\text{Reveal}}=4.01$), $t(93)=1.57$, $p=.120$, $d=0.33$, or career-oriented commitment ($M_{\text{Conceal}}=4.16$ vs. $M_{\text{Reveal}}=3.95$), $t(93)=0.73$, $p=.466$, $d=0.15$. Thus, LGB employees who recalled concealing (vs. revealing) their identities at work reported more negative workplace outcomes – but this difference was not due to these employees caring less about their careers or organizations. Rather, they reported being less satisfied with their experiences at work.

Mediation. We tested the hypothesis that differential levels of belonging may help explain differences in job satisfaction and marginal differences in team-oriented commitment

across the two conditions. We used bootstrapping (with 10,000 resamples) to estimate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013).

The indirect effect of condition on job satisfaction via belonging was significant, $M=0.16$, $SE=0.11$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.46], as was the indirect effect via collective self-esteem, $M=0.15$, $SE=0.10$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.41]. When both mediators were tested simultaneously in a single model, the indirect effect via collective self-esteem remained significant, $M=0.14$, $SE=0.09$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.42], but the indirect effect via belonging did not reach significance, $M=0.04$, $SE=0.09$, 95% CI [-0.11, 0.27].

The indirect effect of condition on team-oriented commitment via belonging was significant, $M=0.29$, $SE=0.12$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.59], as was the indirect effect via collective self-esteem, $M=0.20$, $SE=0.11$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.47]. In a simultaneous mediation model, both indirect effects remained significant (via belonging: $M=0.17$, $SE=0.10$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.44]; via collective self-esteem: $M=0.14$, $SE=0.09$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.38]).

We also considered reverse mediation models, with job satisfaction and team-oriented commitment as simultaneous mediators of the effect of condition on belonging and collective self-esteem. With belonging as the outcome, both indirect effects were nonsignificant (via job satisfaction: $M=0.07$, $SE=0.10$, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.35]; via team-oriented commitment: $M=0.18$, $SE=0.11$, 95% CI [-0.002, 0.44]). With collective self-esteem as the outcome, both indirect effects included zero and thus did not reach traditional levels of significance (via job satisfaction: $M=0.13$, $SE=0.11$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.44]; via team-oriented commitment: $M=0.15$, $SE=0.11$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.43]). Thus, the pattern of results was more strongly in favor of the hypothesized mediation models than the reverse mediation models.

Discussion

Study 1 revealed that recalling a situation in which one concealed (vs. revealed) one's LGB identity at work resulted in decreased feelings of belonging in the recalled situation. Study 1 further showed that the frequently reported negative association between LGB identity concealment and job satisfaction (e.g., Ellis & Riggle, 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002) may be in part explained by the fact that LGB employees feel that they do not fully belong in the workplace and that their coworkers do not value LGB individuals.

Although we found that recalling concealing (vs. revealing) one's LGB identity reduced job satisfaction and (marginally) team-oriented commitment, we did not observe effects of concealment on organizational and career-oriented commitment. The null effect on career-oriented commitment is perhaps unsurprising, as this dimension of commitment primarily involves a personal motivation to advance one's career (Ellemers et al., 2002). As such, one may expect career-oriented commitment to be relatively unaffected by social factors such as identity concealment and belonging. In contrast, team-oriented commitment reflects a prosocial desire to help one's work team (Ellemers et al., 2002) and is directly relevant to interpersonal relationships, making this dimension of commitment more sensitive to felt belonging. Moreover, one might expect to observe stronger effects of our experimental manipulation on outcomes that are more proximal (e.g., job satisfaction; team-oriented commitment), as opposed to more distal and abstract (e.g., organizational commitment). Organizational commitment might be more likely to vary based on factors such as organizational reputation and the quality of organizational practices (e.g., Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990).

Examining the impact of recalling a situation in which one concealed or revealed one's LGB identity is a strength of Study 1, as this procedure allowed us to tap into participants' lived experiences. However, this procedure also has limitations. For example, participants were free to

choose the situation they recalled, raising the possibility that the situations may have differed beyond the intended contrast between concealing versus revealing one's LGB identity. Although participants were asked to provide a brief written description of the situation they recalled, many descriptions were very brief and could thus not be content analyzed in a meaningful way. To address this issue, in Study 2 we employed a more controlled experimental manipulation.

Study 2

Study 2 conceptually replicated and extended Study 1, with key improvements to the design. First, instead of asking participants to recall a situation from their personal experience, we asked participants to imagine a scenario occurring at work in which they either concealed or revealed their stigmatized identities. This procedure yielded greater control over the situation participants imagined. Second, we recruited a larger sample of individuals possessing one of four different stigmatized identities. As well as allowing for a higher-powered conceptual replication of Study 1, this procedure provided an opportunity to investigate whether the impact of identity concealment depends on the specific identity that one possesses. We hypothesized that imagining concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work would reduce felt belonging in the imagined situation, collective self-esteem, job satisfaction, and work commitment (specifically, team-oriented commitment). In addition, we predicted that felt belonging and collective self-esteem would help explain differences in job satisfaction and team-oriented commitment.

Method

Participants. We recruited 303 participants through Amazon's MTurk (143 women, 156 men, 2 participants with other gender, and 2 unreported; mean age=32.22, $SD=10.13$, range: 18-66; 76% White/Caucasian). Two hundred and ninety-nine participants reported being U.S. citizens, and 294 reported that English was their first language. Participants reported having had

their current job for an average of 4.5 years (median: 3 years; range: 0-25 years) and having an average of 12.75 years of work experience (median: 11 years; range: 1-46 years). Mean self-reported salary was \$30,000-\$39,999/year (range: \$0-\$19,999 to more than \$100,000/year). In terms of political orientation (1=*very conservative* to 7=*very liberal*), participants were somewhat liberal ($M=5.03$, $SD=1.56$).

Procedure. Participants were told the study examined the role that different identities may play in workplace experiences and were first asked to report whether they viewed themselves as possessing a particular identity. We used this task to recruit participants who possessed one of the following identities: LGBT identity, history of mental illness, history of physical illness not directly visible to others, and experience with poverty. Participants indicated which of the following statements best described them: “I am gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender” ($N=61$); “I have experienced or am currently experiencing mental health issues that have significantly impacted my life (e.g., depression, eating disorder, personality disorder)” ($N=122$); “I have experienced or am currently experiencing physical health issues that are not immediately visible to others but have significantly impacted my life (e.g., epilepsy)” ($N=43$); “I have experienced or am currently experiencing poverty or very low socioeconomic status” ($N=77$); and “None of these statements describes me.” The study terminated automatically if participants selected the last option. Participants who possessed more than one of the identities were instructed to select the one that was most central in their lives.

Participants next read a description of a situation they might experience at work, and were asked to imagine how it would make them react (bracketed text varied depending on identity): “You have a new colleague at work whom you do not yet know well. One day as you are having lunch with a group of coworkers, this new colleague talks about her cousin who [is

gay / is in treatment for severe depression / has epilepsy / lives below the poverty line], going into some detail about her cousin's life. The group then begins to talk more generally about people who [are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender / have mental health issues / have epilepsy or other "invisible" physical health issues / are poor]. None of the coworkers you are with knows that you [are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender / suffer or have suffered from mental health issues / suffer from an "invisible" physical health issue / have personal experience with poverty].” Depending on condition, the text continued: “Now imagine that you [do not reveal / reveal] to your coworkers that you have personal experience with this identity. You choose [not to reveal / to reveal] your identity because you believe that disclosing this fact about yourself might affect the situation you're currently in, the conversation you're currently having, or your work more generally. You continue the conversation with your coworkers, [concealing / mentioning] this fact about yourself.” Importantly, the text did not imply that the coworkers devalued the identity or that participants would face any particular consequence based on this interaction. Participants then completed dependent measures, with instructions to respond in terms of how they would feel in the situation they had imagined.

Measures. Unless otherwise noted, participants responded on scales anchored with 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). Nine items indexed felt *belonging* (e.g., to what extent did imagining this situation make you feel *personally accepted at work, welcome at your workplace, isolated at work*; 1=*not at all* to 7=*extremely*; $\alpha=.93$). Four items measured *collective self-esteem* (e.g., “Most of my coworkers respect [LGBT people / people who suffer from mental health issues / people who suffer from “invisible” physical health issues / people who have experienced poverty]”; $\alpha=.89$). *Job satisfaction* ($\alpha=.94$), *team-oriented commitment* ($\alpha=.86$), *organizational commitment* ($\alpha=.83$), and *career-oriented commitment* ($\alpha=.85$) were assessed as

in Study 1. Finally, 4 items assessed the perceived positivity of the imagined situation (from Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; e.g., “I would expect to enjoy this interaction with my coworkers”; $\alpha=.88$). The purpose of these items was to provide converging evidence that concealing a stigmatized identity from others is an unpleasant experience, relative to revealing the identity.²

Results

Initial inspection of the means revealed that participants with a history of mental illness responded in markedly different ways relative to all other participants. We thus analyzed the impact of possessing a specific identity with linear regression, using orthogonal contrasts. Each model employed the following predictors: Condition was contrast-coded (Conceal: -0.5; Reveal: 0.5). Identity contrast 1 compared participants with a history of mental illness to all other participants (history of mental illness: -0.75; LGBT identity: 0.25; history of physical illness: 0.25; history of poverty: 0.25). Identity contrast 2 compared participants with a history of poverty to participants with a history of physical illness and LGBT participants (history of mental illness: 0; LGBT identity: 0.25; history of physical illness: 0.25; history of poverty: -0.5). Identity contrast 3 compared participants with a history of physical illness to LGBT participants (history of mental illness: 0; LGBT identity: 0.5; history of physical illness: -0.5; history of poverty: 0). As a set, these orthogonal contrasts fully represent the effect of possessing a specific identity. We also modeled interactions between condition and each identity contrast.

Belonging. With belonging felt in the imagined situation as the dependent measure, two effects emerged (see Figure 1): Participants with a history of physical illness and LGBT participants reported greater belonging than participants with a history of poverty (identity contrast 2), $b=0.71$, $SE=0.26$, $p=.006$. More central to our predictions, participants who imagined revealing their identities reported greater belonging than participants who imagined concealing

their identities, $b=0.33$, $SE=0.16$, $p=.037$. This hypothesized difference between conditions was not moderated by participants' identity (i.e., all interactions were nonsignificant).

With collective self-esteem as the dependent measure, three effects emerged (see Figure 2): Participants with a history of mental illness reported marginally lower collective self-esteem than all other participants (identity contrast 1), $b=0.29$, $SE=0.15$, $p=.051$. Participants with a history of physical illness and LGBT participants reported higher collective self-esteem than participants with a history of poverty (identity contrast 2), $b=1.08$, $SE=0.25$, $p<.001$. In line with hypotheses, participants who imagined revealing their identities reported higher collective self-esteem than participants who imagined concealing their identities, $b=0.35$, $SE=0.15$, $p=.024$. This hypothesized difference between conditions was not moderated by participants' identity.

Job Satisfaction and Work Commitment. For each of job satisfaction, team-oriented commitment, organizational commitment, and career-oriented commitment, only one effect was observed: Relative to all other participants, participants with a history of mental illness reported lower job satisfaction, $b=0.51$, $SE=0.16$, $p=.002$, lower team-oriented commitment, $b=0.34$, $SE=0.13$, $p=.012$, lower organizational commitment, $b=0.51$, $SE=0.15$, $p=.001$, and lower career-oriented commitment, $b=0.31$, $SE=0.14$, $p=.020$.

Mediation. To remain consistent with Study 1, and because statistically significant direct effects are not considered essential for tests of indirect effects (Hayes, 2013), we used bootstrapping (with 10,000 resamples) to test whether the effects of condition on job satisfaction and team-oriented commitment were mediated by felt belonging and collective self-esteem. Belonging and collective self-esteem were entered as simultaneous mediators and the three orthogonal identity contrasts were used as covariates to adjust for the effect of specific identities.

With job satisfaction as the outcome, the indirect effect via collective self-esteem was significant, $M=0.06$, $SE=0.04$, 95% BC CI [0.01, 0.16], but the indirect effect via felt belonging was not, $M=0.09$, $SE=0.06$, 95% BC CI [-0.01, 0.22]. Similarly, with team-oriented commitment as the outcome, the indirect effect via collective self-esteem was significant, $M=0.08$, $SE=0.05$, 95% BC CI [0.003, 0.19], but the indirect effect via felt belonging was not, $M=0.05$, $SE=0.04$, 95% BC CI [-0.003, 0.15]. No evidence was observed for reverse mediation models, either with felt belonging as the outcome (via job satisfaction: $M=0.00$, $SE=0.04$, 95% BC CI [-0.08, 0.09]; via team-oriented commitment: $M=0.04$, $SE=0.04$, 95% BC CI [-0.02, 0.14]) or with collective self-esteem as the outcome (via job satisfaction: $M=0.00$, $SE=0.03$, 95% BC CI [-0.05, 0.05]; via team-oriented commitment: $M=0.06$, $SE=0.06$, 95% BC CI [-0.04, 0.18]).

Perceived Positivity of the Imagined Situation. Participants with a history of mental illness perceived the situation they imagined as less positive than all other participants (identity contrast 1), $b=0.60$, $SE=0.16$, $p<.001$. Participants with a history of physical illness and LGBT participants perceived the situations as more positive than participants with a history of poverty (identity contrast 2), $b=0.67$, $SE=0.27$, $p=.014$. In addition, the effect of identity contrast 1 was moderated by condition, $b=0.74$, $SE=0.32$, $p=.021$ (see Figure 3). Analysis of simple slopes revealed that LGBT participants, participants with a history of physical illness, and participants with a history of poverty perceived the imagined situations more positively in the Reveal (vs. Conceal) condition, $b=0.43$, $SE=0.21$, $p=.041$. In contrast, for participants with a history of mental illness, there was no significant difference between conditions, $b=-0.32$, $SE=0.25$, $p=.198$.

Discussion

Conceptually replicating and extending Study 1, Study 2 revealed that imagining concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work reduced belonging felt in the imagined

situation and collective self-esteem. Whereas we did not observe direct effects of imagining concealing (vs. revealing) on job satisfaction or team commitment, we did again observe evidence of indirect effects via collective self-esteem (though not via belonging felt in the imagined situation). Although the effects were weaker in Study 2, the fact that we conceptually replicated these effects across four different identities bolsters our confidence in this pattern.

Study 2 additionally suggested that individuals with a history of mental illness may be particularly concerned about bias they could face if they reveal their identity, given that revealing (vs. concealing) this identity was not perceived as a more positive workplace social interaction (contrary to other identities examined in Study 2). Given the strong stigmatization of mental illness (e.g., Sibicky & Dovidio, 1986), this concern is apt. However, in prior work we have found that when participants with a history of mental illness conceal this identity during a social interaction, they too are vulnerable to the interpersonal costs of identity concealment, similar to individuals with other stigmatized identities (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Based on these prior findings, we suggest that concealment can be a suboptimal identity management strategy even for individuals who are likely to expect it to shield them from bias.

General Discussion

In two studies, we demonstrated that recalling or imagining an experience of concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity in the workplace context resulted in lower levels of belonging felt in the recalled or imagined situation, lower job satisfaction, and lower work commitment. The two studies, conducted in different cultures and with regard to a variety of different stigmatized identities, provide converging evidence that identity concealment can be associated with detrimental outcomes. Notably, this is the case even though identity concealment is often considered to be an effective way to protect oneself against discrimination. Thus,

although individuals living with stigmatized identities often anticipate negative interpersonal consequences to follow from revealing their true selves (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014), people can in fact benefit in important ways when they do reveal their identities (e.g., when they recall a past experience or imagine a future experience of revealing the identity, as in the present studies; or when they do reveal the identity in a social interaction, as in Newheiser & Barreto, 2014).

Limitations

Although the present studies provide evidence for the hypothesized deleterious impact of identity concealment, we acknowledge key limitations. For example, the Study 1 sample size was fairly small, raising concerns about statistical power. However, this issue was addressed by the higher-powered Study 2, which also examined generalizability by assessing four stigmatized identities. Even so, we note that the effects were weaker in Study 2. In particular, unlike Study 1, Study 2 did not find direct effects of imagining concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity on job satisfaction or team commitment. This difference may be due to Study 1 participants recalling situations that varied in ways other than concealing (vs. revealing) the identity that affected job satisfaction and team commitment. For example, Study 1 participants in the Conceal condition may have recalled hiding their identities from fellow team members (reducing felt belonging), whereas participants in the Reveal condition may have recalled revealing their identities to outsiders (with a lesser impact on workplace variables). Moreover, recalling an experience from one's past is vulnerable to memory reconstruction, and thus Study 1 cannot establish accurate recall of one's lived experience.

In Study 2, the content of the imagined situation was more tightly controlled, potentially reducing the direct impact of identity concealment on job satisfaction and work commitment – though an indirect effect via collective self-esteem was nevertheless observed. However, Study 2

alone cannot establish whether the observed experimental effects generalize to real-world situations, nor can it address the question of how long-lasting the effects may be. Future research will benefit from examining features of “live” workplace social interactions that are more or less likely to represent an identity management predicament to individuals coping with stigma (e.g., revealing vs. concealing one’s identity in interactions with fellow team members, supervisors, or mentors). Future studies may also test whether making an identity more or less salient in a specific social context affects how people respond to concealing (vs. revealing) their identities.

We also note that the present studies cannot fully address direction of causality. Whereas we interpret our findings as showing that identity concealment has deleterious consequences, it is also the case that individuals may choose to conceal stigmatized identities when they perceive disclosure to be especially costly (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). Thus, Study 1 participants who considered an experience of identity concealment may have recalled situations in which they expected less acceptance from others, relative to participants who recalled revealing their identities. The content of the imagined situation was more tightly controlled in Study 2, but still left open the possibility that participants asked to imagine identity concealment may have construed the *consequences* of revealing their identities as more detrimental, perhaps leading them to generally perceive their workplace environment as negative. Indeed, insofar as identity concealment serves to socially isolate the individual (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014), it goes hand in hand with negative interpersonal experiences. Thus, whereas it is possible to experimentally control features of the situation people have in mind, it may not be possible to similarly control the anticipated consequences of concealing versus revealing a stigmatized identity. Accordingly, it is crucial to consider features of the context in which individuals manage their stigmatized

identities, as concealment is likely to be reactive to the social context (e.g., being more likely in environments perceived to be unwelcoming) in addition to causing negative experiences.

Implications for Social Issues and Policy

Our findings suggest that openness about one's identity is often beneficial for stigmatized individuals, their ingroups, and the organizations in which they work. Only by revealing their identities can individuals challenge stigmatizing views held by others, showcase diversity within the stigmatized ingroup (and the work organization) and question stereotypical preconceptions (see also Browne, 2014). In addition, identity concealment does not consistently deliver on its key promise: Although individuals expect concealment to increase acceptance, our evidence suggests that this is not always the case. Indeed, identity concealment (vs. disclosure) is more likely to be a preferred strategy in non-inclusive contexts. Thus, organizational climates that push individuals to assimilate to normative ways of being do not erase difference; instead they encourage masking and concealment of diversity. Given that identity concealment is by nature an invisible act, its social and organizational costs may also be difficult to detect, explain, and correct.

Thus, our results point to the hidden ramifications of prejudice. Future research may benefit from examining individual differences that may render people living with particular stigmatized identities more or less vulnerable to these ramifications. For example, the consequences of identity concealment are moderated by factors such as rejection sensitivity (Cole, Kemeny, & Taylor, 1997), socioeconomic status (McGarrity & Huebner, 2014), and disability status (Cook, Salter, & Stadler, in press). Understanding who may be particularly likely to benefit from openness about a stigmatized identity will help with efforts to create supportive organizational environments for all employees. Indeed, we do not suggest that

everyone must be actively “out” in all contexts, but simply that actively concealing one’s identity can be costly. Thus, not expressing one’s identity if one feels no need to do so is likely not problematic; but environments that pressure individuals toward concealment are suboptimal.

The present work indicates that concealing a stigmatized identity has negative consequences for individual wellbeing that impinge on one’s ability to relate positively to others and feel that one belongs in the workplace. Our findings suggest that identities in part serve the purpose of interacting with others; when one is not fully open about one’s true self, social interactions suffer. This deleterious impact reduces work commitment and job satisfaction, which is likely to ultimately affect team processes and organizational performance in negative ways. In addition to arguing that individuals can benefit at a personal level from being authentic and true to themselves, we stress the need to create organizational climates in which the costs of revealing a stigmatized identity are minimal and its benefits are optimal. Our findings speak to the value of promoting diversity in all its forms in order to ensure that authenticity and belonging are possible for everyone.

References

- Barreto, M., Ellemers, N., & Banal, S. (2006). Working under cover: Performance-related self-confidence among members of contextually devalued groups who try to pass. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 36*, 337-352. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.314
- Browne, J. (2014). *The glass closet: Why coming out is good for business*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Caldwell, D. F., Chatman, J. A., & O'Reilly, C. A. (1990). Building organizational commitment: A multifirm study. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 63*, 245-261. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8325.1990.tb00525.x
- Clair, J. A., Beatty, J. E., & MacLean, T. L. (2005). Out of sight but not out of mind: Managing invisible social identities in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review, 30*, 78-95. doi: 10.5465/AMR.2005.15281431
- Cole, S. W., Kemeny, M. E., Taylor, S. E., & Visscher, B. R. (1996). Elevated physical health risk among gay men who conceal their homosexual identity. *Health Psychology, 15*, 243-251. doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.15.4.243
- Cole, S. W., Kemeny, M. E., & Taylor, S. E. (1997). Social identity and physical health: Accelerated HIV progression in rejection-sensitive gay men. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*, 320-335. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.72.2.320.
- Cook, J. E., Salter, A., & Stadler, G. (in press). Concealing chronic illness: A strategic choice. *Journal of Social Issues*.
- Crocker, J., & Luhtanen, R. (1990). Collective self-esteem and ingroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 60-67. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.58.1.60

- Ellemers, N., de Gilder, D., & van de Heuvel, H. (1998). Career-oriented versus team-oriented commitment and behavior at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 717-739. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.83.5.717
- Ellis, A. E., & Riggle, E. D. B. (1996). The relation of job satisfaction and degree of openness about one's sexual orientation for lesbians and gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality, 30*, 75-85. doi: 10.1300/J082v30n02_04
- Frable, D. E., Platt, L., & Hoey, S. (1998). Concealable stigmas and positive self-perceptions: Feeling better around similar others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 909-922. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.74.4.909
- Griffith, K. H., & Hebl, M. R. (2002). The disclosure dilemma for gay men and lesbians: "Coming out" at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 1191-1199. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1191
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Jones, E. E., Farina, A., Hastorf, A. H., Markus, H., Miller, D. T., & Scott, R. A. (1984). *Social stigma: The psychology of marked relationships*. New York, NY: Freeman.
- Law, C. L., Martinez, L. R., Ruggs, E. N., Hebl, M. R., & Akers, E. (2011). Trans-parency in the workplace: How the experiences of transsexual employees can be improved. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 79*, 710-723. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2011.03.018
- Lyons, B. J., Zatzick, C. D., Thompson, T., & Bushe, G. R. (in press). Stigma identity management in hybrid organizational cultures. *Journal of Social Issues*.
- McGarrity, L. A., & Huebner, D. M. (2014). Is being out about sexual orientation uniformly healthy? The moderating role of socioeconomic status in a prospective study of gay and

- bisexual men. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 47, 28-38. doi: 10.1007/s12160-013-9575-6
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 674-697. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674
- Newheiser, A. K., & Barreto, M. (2014). Hidden costs of hiding stigma: Ironic interpersonal consequences of concealing a stigmatized identity in social interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 52, 58-70. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2014.01.002
- Quinn, D. M., & Chaudoir, S. R. (2009). Living with a concealable stigmatized identity: The impact of anticipated stigma, centrality, salience, and cultural stigma on psychological distress and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97, 634-651. doi: 10.1037/a0015815
- Ragins, B. R., Singh, R., & Cornwell, J. M. (2007). Making the invisible visible: Fear and disclosure of sexual orientation at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1103-1118. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.92.4.1103
- Ruggs, E. N., Martinez, L. R. Hebl, M. R., & Law, C. L. (2015). Workplace “trans”-actions: How organizations, coworkers, and individual openness influence perceived gender identity discrimination. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 2, 404-412. doi: 10.1037/sgd0000112
- Ryan, W. S., Legate, N., Weinstein, N., & Rahman, Q. (in press). Autonomy support fosters lesbian, gay and bisexual identity disclosure and wellness, especially for those with internalized homophobia. *Journal of Social Issues*.

- Sibicky, M., & Dovidio, J. F. (1986). Stigma of psychological therapy: Stereotypes, interpersonal reactions, and the self-fulfilling prophecy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33*, 148-154. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.33.2.148
- Twenge, J. M., Catanese, K. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2002). Social exclusion causes self-defeating behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 606-615. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.83.3.606
- Waldo, C. R. (1999). Working in a majority context: A structural model of heterosexism as minority stress in the workplace. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46*, 218-232. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.46.2.218
- Wessel, J. L. (in press). The importance of allies and allied organizations: Sexual orientation disclosure at work. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Author Biographies

Anna-Kaisa Newheiser is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University at Albany, SUNY. She received her PhD in social psychology from Yale University. Her research examines how prejudice, stigmatization, and other group-based biases develop and persist. Her specific areas of interest include group perception, intergroup interactions, and moral judgment.

Manuela Barreto is a Professor of Social and Organizational Psychology at the University of Exeter, UK. She obtained her PhD in social psychology from the Free University, Amsterdam. Her research interests are on social identity processes and the psychology of the disadvantaged, exemplified by her work on identity respect, reactions to prejudice and underrepresentation, and the psychology of concealed identities.

Jasper Tiemersma is a senior IT officer at Nuffic, an expertise and service center for internationalization in Dutch education, from primary and secondary education to professional and academic higher education and research. He obtained his MSc in social and organizational psychology from Leiden University.

Footnotes

¹ Participants also completed measures of personal self-esteem, workplace absenteeism, turnover intentions, identity threat, and achievement orientations. These measures were not relevant to our hypotheses and are thus not discussed further. No differences between conditions were observed, $ps=.121-.743$, $ds=0.07-0.33$.

² Two additional measures were included. First, 2 items assessed openness about one's identity ("I am open about this identity at work; most of my coworkers know about it"; "I am usually open about this identity; most people outside of work know about it"; $r[300]=.69$; averaged into a single index). A 4 (identity) \times 2 (condition) ANOVA revealed only a main effect of identity, $F(3, 294)=14.20$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2_p=.13$. Bonferroni-corrected post-hoc comparisons showed that participants with a history of mental illness ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.51$) were less open about their identities than all other participants, $ps\leq.004$. Participants with a history of poverty ($M=3.82$, $SD=1.83$) were less open about their identities than participants with a history of physical illness ($M=4.66$, $SD=1.66$), $p=.048$. LGBT participants had an intermediate score ($M=4.20$, $SD=1.74$), which differed significantly only from participants with a history of mental illness. Second, 2 items measured the importance of one's identity ("This identity is important to me"; "I feel a connection to other people who also have this identity"; $r[297]=.59$; averaged into a single index). A 4 (identity) \times 2 (condition) ANOVA revealed only a main effect of identity, $F(3, 294)=15.70$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2_p=.14$. Bonferroni-corrected post-hoc comparisons showed that LGBT participants ($M=5.66$, $SD=1.20$) reported greater importance than other participants, $ps\leq.001$; no other comparisons were significant (history of mental illness: $M=4.21$, $SD=1.36$; history of poverty: $M=4.20$, $SD=1.67$; history of physical illness: $M=4.52$, $SD=1.52$).

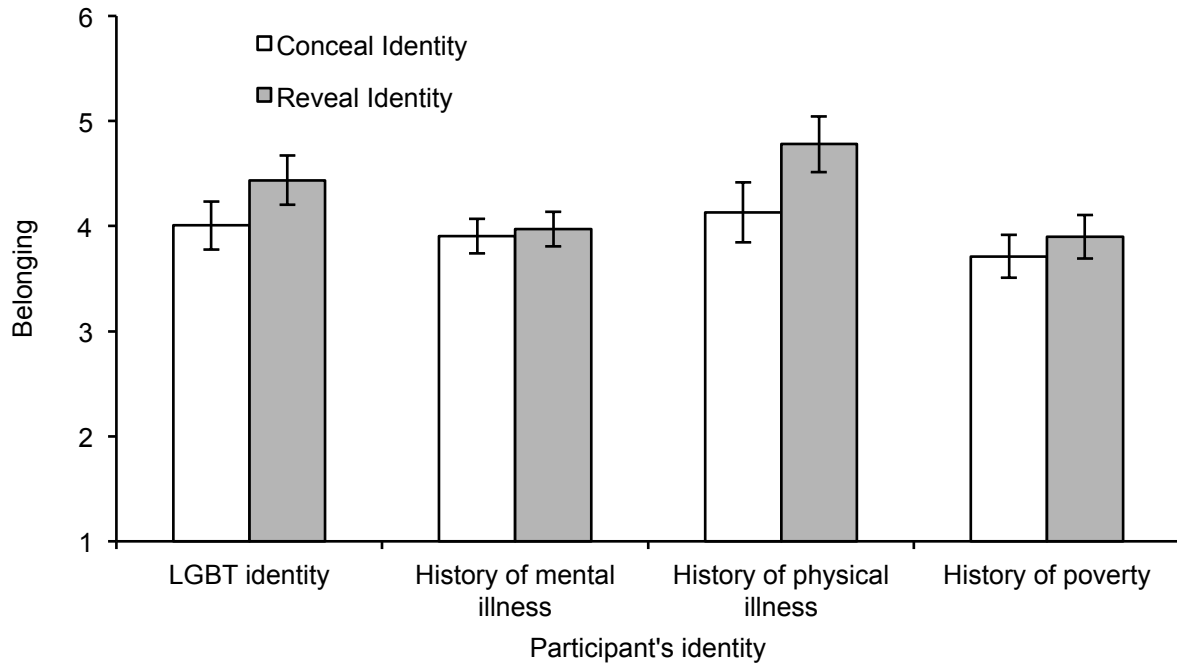


Figure 1. The effect of imagining concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work on felt belonging in the imagined situation (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors of the mean. Possible range: 1-7; higher values indicate greater felt belonging.

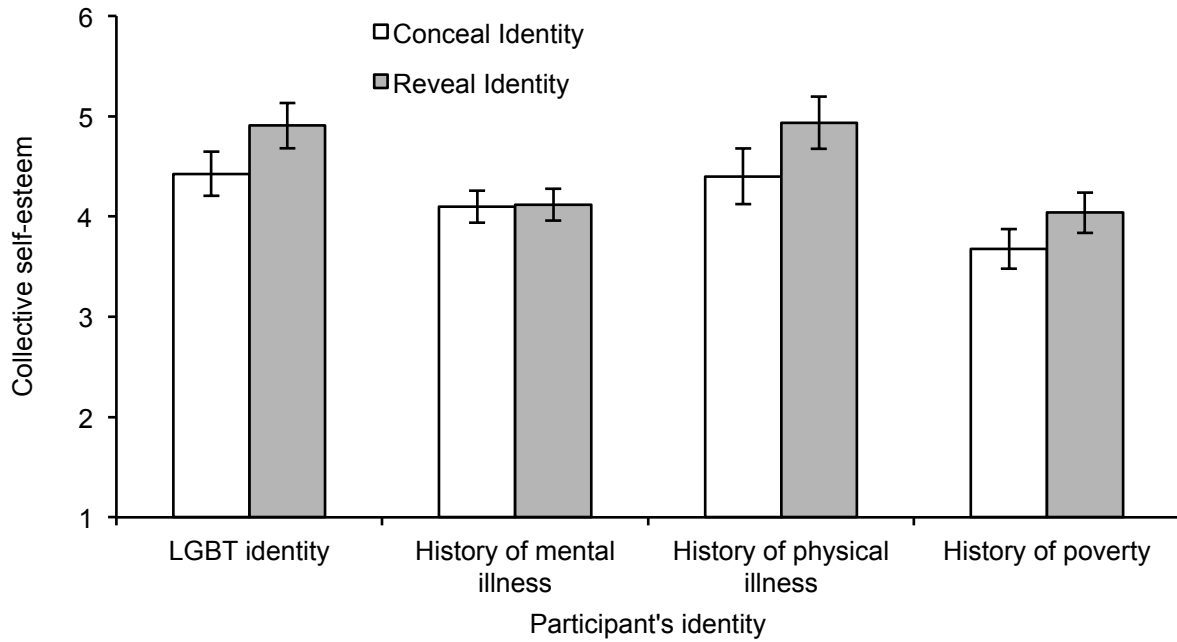


Figure 2. The effect of imagining concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work on collective self-esteem (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors of the mean. Possible range: 1-7; higher values indicate greater collective self-esteem.

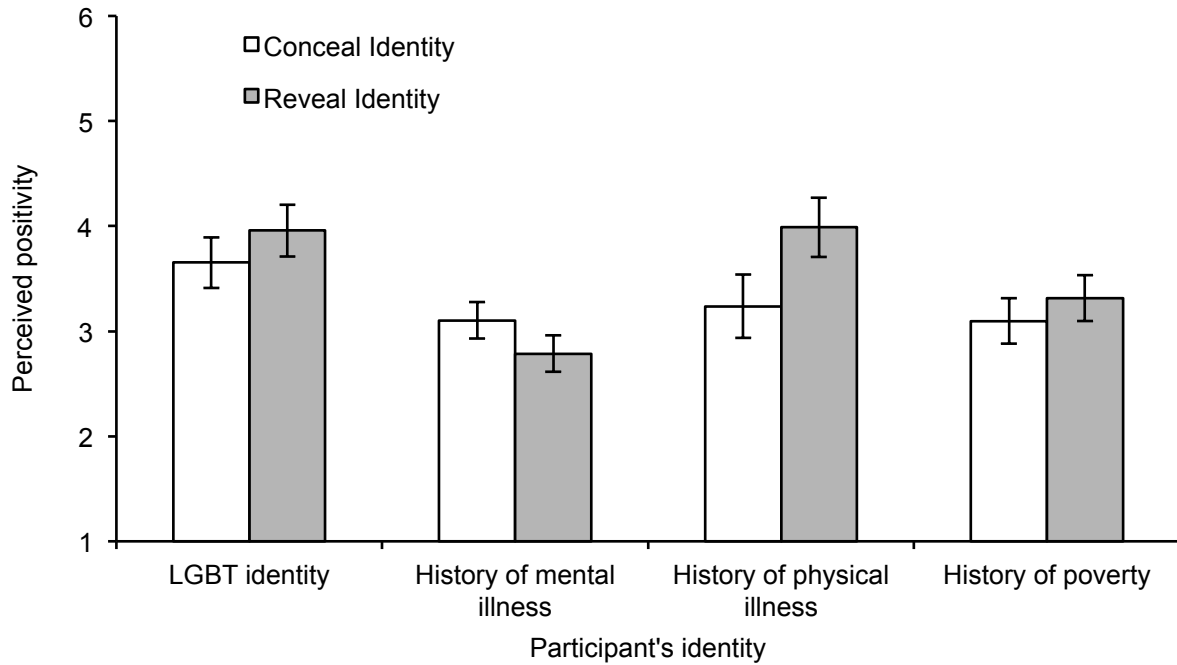


Figure 3. The effect of imagining concealing (vs. revealing) a stigmatized identity at work on perceived positivity of the imagined situation (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors of the mean. Possible range: 1-7; higher values indicate greater positivity.