Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 119 (2025) 104736

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Experimental Social Psychology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jesp

Closets breed suspicion: Environments that stigmatize concealable identities cast doubt on claims to non-stigmatized identities☆

Harrison Oakes [1], Richard P. Eibach [*], Hilary B. Bergsieker

University of Waterloo, Department of Psychology, PAS 3020200, University Avenue, WestWaterloo, ONN2L 3G1, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Identity suspicion
Concealable stigma
Attribution
Discounting principle
Homophobia

ABSTRACT

Social environments that stigmatize concealable identities increase observers' suspicion that an individual's claimed identity is not their "true" identity. Identity-stigmatizing environments incentivize "closeting" (i.e., concealing) targeted identities, rendering claims to contrasting non-stigmatized identities ambiguous (e.g., self-protective? self-expressive?). Such ambiguity fosters *identity suspicion*. In three experimental studies with nine adult American samples ($N = 3148$), participants expressed more suspicion about an individual's claim to a non-stigmatized concealable identity within an environment that stigmatized (vs. affirmed) the contrasting concealable sexual ($d = 0.40$) or religious ($d = 0.70$) identity. Identity suspicion was strongest for individuals with attributes stereotypically associated with the stigmatized identity but persisted even for individuals with attributes stereotypically associated with the *non-stigmatized* identity (Study 2). Observers' perceived likelihood of identity suspicion predicted their perceived incentive for individuals to conceal attributes stereotypically associated with the stigmatized identity, even to the point of incurring personal costs (Study 1f).

1. Introduction

Closets breed suspicion. When an identity is both stigmatized and concealable, people are incentivized to hide (i.e., "closet") it from others, sometimes by claiming the contrasting, non-stigmatized concealable identity (e.g., claiming to be straight to hide being gay). Ironically, when observers recognize that identity-stigmatizing environments strongly incentivize the concealment of stigmatized identities, assertions of a contrasting non-stigmatized identity may elicit their suspicion, because such assertions have (at least) two plausible motivations: authentic self-expression (Jourard, 1971; Pachankis, 2007; Swann & Read, 1981) or self-protection from the environment's stigma (Goh et al., 2019; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). Extending research on the psychology of stigma and concealment, here we examine the effects of identity stigmatizing environments on observers' perceptions of identity claims.

We draw on theories of attribution (Gilbert, 1998; Kelley, 1971) and suspicious mindsets (Fein, 1996; Fein et al., 1990; Fein & Hilton, 1994) to propose a theory of identity suspicion, which serves to predict when and why observers may discount explicit identity claims. Our theory focuses on the role of social environments in fomenting observers' suspicion around who secretly holds a stigmatized concealable identity, such as alleged "false" Jewish converts to Christianity in the Spanish Inquisition (Netanyahu, 2001), witches in the Salem witch trials (Detweiler, 1975), and communists under McCarthyism (Schrecker, 1998). Extending Erikson's (1966) observation that "[those] who fear witches soon find themselves surrounded by them" (p. 22), we reason that contexts in which certain concealable identities are stigmatized are also ones in which nearly anyone is subject to the shadow of suspicion.

To test this hypothesis, we experimentally investigated the effects of social environments on people's propensity to harbor suspicions about someone else's identity claim, finding that environments that stigmatize a concealable identity (thus creating the metaphorical closet) fuel suspicion that nearly anyone might secretly bear the stigmatized identity. Moreover, our analyses suggest identity suspicion arises less from individual bias than from logical applications of the discounting principle, which trigger suspicious mindsets (Fein et al., 1990; Kelley, 1971).

Identity suspicion, as named and theorized here, centers on uncertainty about others' identity claims specifically, not generalized suspicion or distrust of those individuals. Although general animus toward

☆ This paper has been recommended for acceptance by Chadly Stern.

* Corresponding author at: University of Waterloo, 200 University Avenue West, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1, Canada.
E-mail address: reibach@uwaterloo.ca (R.P. Eibach).
[1] Harrison Oakes is now at HumanSystems Incorporated.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2025.104736
Received 31 August 2024; Received in revised form 24 February 2025; Accepted 24 February 2025
Available online 4 March 2025

the stigmatized identity sets up the conditions for such identity suspicion to arise, observers do not need to endorse that animus to recognize that those who are subjected to it will be motivated to conceal their identities to avoid stigma.

1.1. Social markedness

Our explanation of identity suspicion draws on Brekhus's (1996, 1998, 2003) articulation of social markedness: "Social marking is a rigid, asymmetrical classification process that accents one side of a contrast as unnatural, thereby tacitly naturalizing the unmarked side" (Brekhus, 1996, p. 497). A socially marked identity is deemed to deviate from its "normative" or "natural" contrasting identity (e.g., during the Spanish Inquisition, being Jewish was a socially marked identity perceived as a "non-normative" deviation from its "normative" contrasting identity, being Catholic). These two identities become paired in people's minds as contrasting sides of a binary (Brekhus, 1998).

Notably, some marked identities can differ from a norm in divergent directions (e.g., exceptionally high and low intelligence; Brekhus, 1996). We do not, however, anticipate identity suspicion developing toward marked identities where they are not stigmatized, because in such cases there exists no perceived incentive to closet the identity. Accordingly, we use the terms "marked" and "stigmatized" interchangeably, because our theory relies on (un)marked identities also being (non-)stigmatized and because socially perceived identity binaries of social markedness (e.g., gay/straight,[2] Jewish/non-Jewish) are central to identity suspicion.

1.2. The attributional logic of identity suspicion

Our analysis of identity suspicion builds on previous research on attribution theory's discounting principle (Kelley, 1971) and suspicious mindsets (Fein, 1996; Fein et al., 1990; Fein & Hilton, 1994). Per the discounting principle, when an individual's behavior is incentivized by external forces, observers will doubt whether the behavior reflects that individual's authentic characteristics (Jones et al., 1961; Kelley, 1971). Despite its intuitive logic, people frequently fail to apply the discounting principle (hence, the fundamental attribution error or correspondence bias; e.g., Gilbert, 1998). This bias can be overcome when observers "actively entertain multiple, plausibly rival, hypotheses about the motives or genuineness of [an individual's] behavior" (Fein, 1996; p. 1165), becoming suspicious about the individual's underlying motive. This suspicious mindset, in turn, promotes effortful cognitive processing that helps observers overcome the correspondence bias and invoke the discounting principle. Thus, we hypothesize that in identity-stigmatizing environments observers will recognize alternative explanations for an individual's claim to a non-stigmatized identity and question the claim's authenticity. Alternatively, observers should have no reason to question the claim's authenticity in environments that affirm or do not stigmatize the concealable identity.

Although identity suspicion follows directly from classic attribution theory, no research (to our knowledge) has tested the discounting principle's implications for observers' inferences about individuals' self-professed identities (for work relating the discounting principle to ratings of sexuality, see Bosson et al., 2023). Prior theory and research on attribution largely focused on observers' inferences about personality traits, attitudes, abilities, and motivations, linking inferences about others' social identities to (often decontextualized) behavioral and appearance cues (e.g., lt, Lick, & Johnson, 2020; Ambady et al., 1999; Freeman et al., 2010; Lick & Johnson, 2016; Rule et al., 2008), but not the situational contexts in which those identities are expressed. Examining attributions about identity claims made in identity-stigmatizing environments reveals problematic social consequences arising from logical use of the discounting principle, in contrast to previous work largely focusing on problems related to its *underutilization* (e.g., Berry & Frederickson, 2015).

Our analysis suggests identity suspicion can emerge from purely rational attributional processes, in the absence of animus on the part of observers. For example, because homophobic environments stigmatize non-straight sexualities, incentivizing people to self-present as straight, the discounting principle should lead rational observers (with or without homophobic attitudes) to suspect that people outwardly claiming to be straight might secretly be gay, based on awareness of environmental norms that stigmatize being gay. The pretest results in Study 1 of West et al.'s (2021) work on fragile heterosexuality provide initial support for this claim. After viewing a man's profile that reported his sexuality as straight or gay, participants believed his claim to be straight less than his claim to be gay.

1.3. Secondary closets

To disambiguate claims to non-stigmatized identities in identity-stigmatizing environments, people practice "the hermeneutics of suspicion" (Felski, 2011) and become close readers of each other's behavior, searching for signs that may indicate the other's concealed membership in the stigmatized group. This hypervigilance often involves attending to behaviors and attributes socially coded as identity cues and seeing them as signifiers of "true" identity (e.g., see Dean, 2014). For example, in homophobic social environments, any man's claim to be straight can be perceived as self-expressive (Pachankis, 2007; Swann & Read, 1981) or self-protective (Goh et al., 2019; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). Observers may attend closely to attributes coded as markers of gay identity (e.g., being a hairdresser; Madon, 1997) to disambiguate his claim to be straight.

Accordingly, where identity suspicion exists, people seek to avoid becoming targets of suspicion. Avoiding suspicion not only incentivizes individuals with the marked identity to conceal it in the proverbial closet, but also motivates individuals with the contrasting unmarked identity to conceal any cues associated with the marked identity in a *secondary closet*. While concealing such cues is often part of concealing marked identities, we apply the idea of a secondary closet specifically to the concealment of these cues by individuals with an unmarked identity (e.g., straight individuals concealing attributes associated with being gay or medieval Christians concealing attributes associated with practicing Judaism). Essentially, environments that pressure individuals to conceal a stigmatized identity in the (primary) closet may consequently generate a secondary closet in which people with the contrasting non-stigmatized identity are pressured to actively conceal attributes coded as cues of the stigmatized identity.

2. Overview of studies

We present results from three studies (including nine distinct samples) investigating the impact of social environments on observers' belief in an actor's claim to hold an unmarked identity. Each study tested the *identity suspicion hypothesis* that when considering a social environment that stigmatizes rather than affirms a concealable marked identity, observers would report more identity suspicion toward someone who claims to hold the contrasting unmarked concealable identity. Studies 1 and 2 tested this hypothesis by experimentally varying whether participants first read about a homophobic or nonhomophobic high school, before considering a male student who said he was straight but exhibited gender-nonconforming attributes socially coded as markers of being gay.[3] Participants then described their impressions of the male

[2] Though not binary, sexuality is generally perceived as such (e.g., Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016).

[3] For a discussion of our conceptualization of "true" identity and gender nonconformity, see OSM Appendix A.

student—later coded for spontaneous mentions of identity suspicion—before estimating the likelihood that he was straight. For greater generality, Study 3 tested our core identity suspicion hypothesis in a distinct domain: religious identity in medieval Spain. We experimentally varied whether participants read a description of an era of Jewish persecution or religious tolerance, before considering a Spanish man who identified as a Christian but exhibited several Christian-nonconforming attributes often associated with Judaism. Participants then estimated the likelihood that he was a Christian.

Within (mega-analytic) Study 1, seven individual experiments further clarified mediators, moderators, and boundary conditions (for design features of each experiment see Table 1). They tested whether hypothesized effects of homophobic versus nonhomophobic social environments on identity suspicion (a) emerged across different forms of gender-nonconformity (Studies 1a & 1b), including a boundary condition (Study 1c); (b) differed from comparison environments with no information about homophobia (Study 1b) or with intermediate levels of homophobia (Studies 1d & 1e); (c) were systematically associated with perceived incentive to closet (Studies 1f & 1g); and (d) were seen as likely to induce downstream costs for the individual targeted by identity suspicion (Study 1f).

To assess how actors' characteristics and behavior interact with social environments to determine observers' suspicions, Study 2 then tested our *amplified suspicion hypothesis.* We predicted that in a social environment that stigmatizes a concealable marked identity, observers' suspicions of an individual's claim to hold the contrasting identity would be amplified if that individual exhibits behaviors or attributes socially coded as markers of the stigmatized identity, rather than identity-conforming characteristics. In contrast, exhibiting the same identity-nonconforming (vs. identity-conforming) cues within a social environment that *affirms* a concealable marked identity should have a much smaller impact—if any—on identity suspicion: Stereotyping processes might trigger initial suspicion, but it should be offset by awareness that individuals have little cause to conceal or misrepresent their identity in non-stigmatizing environments. Research also suggests that unmarked identities may serve as attributional defaults when information about social environments is not salient (e.g., Lick & Johnson, 2016). To test the amplified suspicion hypothesis, Study 2 experimentally varied whether a male student exhibited attributes stereotypically associated with gay or straight men and whether he did so within a homophobic or non-homophobic social context.

Finally, to assess the downstream consequences of identity suspicion, three experiments (Studies 1f, 1g, & 3) tested the corollary *secondary closet hypothesis.* That is, individuals who possess attributes socially coded as markers of a concealable stigmatized identity but who assert a contrasting non-stigmatized identity will be perceived as more strongly incentivized to closet those stereotypically associated attributes to avoid identity suspicion when situated in an identity-stigmatizing (vs. -affirming) environment. These studies assessed observers' perceptions of the focal individual's motivation to conceal attributes stereotypically associated with the relevant stigmatized identity to avoid identity suspicion, probing effects of the social environment and (in Study 1f) correlations with downstream costs for that individual.

2.1. Methodological and analytic approach

Our studies were not pre-registered but received ethics clearance from [university name] (#30832). We report sample size determinations, data exclusions, all manipulations, and all analyzed measures. Study-specific sensitivity analyses, results, detailed analyses, and full measure lists are reported in the online supplementary materials (OSM). All data, syntax, and materials are publicly available (https://osf.io/8b95z). Data were analyzed using IBM Corp, 2024.

2.1.1. Sampling and exclusions

Following recommendations for effects of unknown magnitude (Simmons et al., 2013), we aimed for sample sizes of approximately 100/condition, plus 10 % to account for exclusions, in Studies 1a-1e and 2. In Studies 1f, 1g, and 3, we aimed for larger sample sizes to test the secondary closet hypothesis via mediation. All participants were U.S. residents recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform, disallowing repeat participants. We applied several a priori exclusion criteria, excluding participants who (a) withdrew their data after debriefing, (b) came from identical IP addresses within or across studies, (c) provided multiple nonsense open-ended responses, or (d) failed all attention checks (see Table 2 and OSM Appendix B).

3. Study 1: mega-analysis

Study 1 comprises a series of seven similar experiments (Studies 1a-1g) with shared methods, manipulations, and measures. Thus, for concision and robustness, the main text reports common design elements and results analyzed mega-analytically, aggregating across Studies 1a-1g. Mega-analysis increases power by using pooled samples of individual participant data to more precisely test effect sizes and moderation (Cooper & Patall, 2009; Costafreda, 2009; Curran & Hussong, 2009; Sung et al., 2014). In turn, the OSM (Appendices C-E) reports procedures, methods, and full results for each experiment within Study 1. For ease of reference, the focal result—quantifying effects of social environment on identity suspicion—within each experiment is also provided in Table 1.

3.1. Method

All Study 1 participants first read that the studies "examine impressions of environments and the people within them" and provided

Table 1
Overview: Social Environments, Profiles, and Environment Effect Sizes by Study.

Study	Level of stigma in social environment			Focal person's profile	Environment effect (*g*)		
					IS	PIC	DC
1a	High	None		Love of fashion	0.48***	–	–
1b	High	None	Unstated	Close male friendship	0.36*	–	–
1c	High	None		Sexual experimentation	0.22	–	–
1d	High	None	Mixed	Love of fashion	0.28*	–	–
1e	High	None	Mixed	Close male friendship	0.31*	–	–
1f	High	None		Love of fashion	0.47***	1.44***	0.97***
1g	High	None		Close male friendship	0.30***	1.66***	–
2	High	None		Love of fashion	0.85***	–	–
2	High	None		Love of rugby	0.55***	–	–
3	High	None		Avoids pork, uses Hebrew	0.70***	1.07***	–

Note. IS = identity suspicion. PIC = perceived incentive to closet, DC = downstream costs. "–" = not tested. Reported effect sizes contrast environments with high (vs. no) stigma. For condition means and confidence intervals for effect sizes, see Table S2 (Studies 1a-1c), Table S3 (Studies 1d & 1e), Tables 3 and S4 (Studies 1f & 1g), Table 4 (Study 2), and the main text (Study 3).

Table 2
Participant Characteristics by Study.

	Study 1[a]	Study 2	Study 3
Total initiated	2565	500	393
Attrition	361 (14.1 %)	60 (12.0 %)	43 (10.9 %)
Attrition by condition: χ^2 (*p*)	7.16 [b] (.007)	0.61 (.895)	0.63 (.429)
Exclusions			
Withdrew data	31	5	1
Nonsense responses	6	4	4
Failed attention checks	85	17	4
Duplicate IP address	21	4	0
Incomplete main DV	3	0	0
Final *N*	2058	410	341
Age (*Mdn*)	36	35	34
Sex (% female)	60.9	63.2	52.5
Cisgender (%)	98.1	97.8	99.7
Exclusively straight (%)	75.9	73.8	79.5
Person of Color (%)	19.0	20.2	29.6 [c]
Income (*Mdn*)	$35,001 -$50,000	$50,001 -$75,000	$50,001 -$75,000
Education (*Mdn*)	College Degree	College Degree	College Degree
No high-school kids (%)	88.5	88.1	N/A

Note. Total initiated = everyone who clicked on the HIT; Duplicate IP Address = IP address repeated within or across studies; Cisgender = sex assigned at birth matches gender identity; N/A = not collected. Demographic percentages exclude missing data (up to 2.4 % of cases, plus one intersex participant in Study 1g).
[a] Study 1 includes only mega-analyzed cases from the homophobic and nonhomophobic environments in each experiment (Studies 1b, 1d, & 1e included a third environment; see Table 1). Hence, the total participant count in Table 2 ($N = 2809$) does not reflect the total participant count across all experiments ($N = 3148$). For detailed exclusion and demographic data by experiment, see OSM Appendix B. [b] Mega-analytically, attrition was slightly higher in the homophobic (15.9 %) than nonhomophobic (12.2 %) condition. [c] A revised race measure (see Methods) increased the proportion of participants of color.

Table 3
Peer Identity Suspicion, Perceived Incentive to Closet, and Downstream Costs by Social Environment (Study 1).

	Social environment			
	Nonhomophobic	Homophobic		
Measure	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*F*	*g* [95 % CI]
Peer identity suspicion	1.43 (1.23)	3.21 (1.02)	649.45***	1.44 [1.24, 1.65]
Perceived incentive to closet	0.95 (1.17)	2.80 (1.22)	601.33***	1.66 [1.46, 1.86]
Downstream costs	−1.63 (0.98)	−0.48 (1.37)	110.47***,[a]	0.97 [0.78, 1.17]

Note. Denominator *df* were 988.0, 986.1, and 463, respectively. Downstream costs were not assessed in Study 1g.
[a] Welch's $F(1, 405.0) = 108.5$, $p < .001$, given a Levene's violation, $F(1, 463) = 25.72$, $p < .001$.
*** $p < .001$.

consent. We randomly assigned participants to read one of several descriptions of a school's social environment, followed by a profile of a gender-nonconforming, straight-identifying male student. Next, participants described their impressions of the male student, completed the dependent measures, reported their demographics, learned the study purpose (with the option to withdraw data), and were paid.

3.1.1. Stimulus materials

We developed novel stimuli for these studies. In all studies, we intentionally focused on environments set in other countries to reduce the likelihood of participants disregarding or distorting these settings' descriptions to fit their assumptions about (or experience with) specific local environments.

Social Environments. Across studies, participants read a detailed school description (for exact wording see OSM Appendix N), presented as an excerpt from McCormack's (2011) ethnographic report of Grade 11 and 12 boys attending Standard High, a British school. The nonhomophobic and homophobic versions of this description (used in each study) respectively detailed "the [absence/sheer prevalence] of homophobic behavior" at Standard High, the [in]frequency of homophobic language among students, several boys' personal interviews generalizing their own [nonhomophobic/homophobic] attitudes to the student body, and [ease/difficulty] for anyone coming out. Notably, this *nonhomophobic* description came almost verbatim from McCormack (2011); a matched homophobic description paralleled its form, content, and narrative structure.

A structurally similar third environment was tested in three samples: a control condition (Study 1b) emphasizing "the sheer prevalence of extracurricular activity" and positive student-teacher relationships or an intermediate condition (Studies 1d and 1e) describing a "mixture of homophobic discourse and support for gays" at Standard High. Our mega-analysis includes only the focal homophobic and nonhomophobic environment conditions (total $N = 2058$); for sample-level comparisons to these other conditions see the OSM (Appendices C & D).

Profiles. Each sample read a standard profile of Steve, a 12th-grader at Standard High (for exact wording see OSM Appendix O). In six of the seven experiments, this profile highlighted either (a) his artistic talents and love of fashion (Studies 1a, 1d, & 1f) or (b) his tightly knit group of friends and close emotional bond with his same-sex best friend (Studies 1b, 1e, & 1g). Testing the boundaries of identity suspicion, in Study 1c the profile featured his attitudes toward a one-time experience of "fooling around" with another guy at a party (see Table 1).

3.1.2. Measures

We assessed identity suspicion in all studies.[4] In Studies 1f and 1g we added measures (described below) to test our hypotheses about secondary closets and (in Study 1f) costs of concealment. For a full list of measures (primary and additional) by study in viewing order, see OSM Appendix P.

Open-Ended Impressions. To assess whether identity suspicion

[4] Studies 1a-1c had a preamble about adolescence, intended to license suspicion (see OSM Appendix C). It was removed in all subsequent studies.

occurred to participants without direct sexuality-related prompts, we also asked participants, "What do you think about Steve after reading the excerpt from McCormack's (2011) article?" and recorded their open-ended responses. Notably, this measure immediately followed the social environment and profile descriptions and preceded all close-ended dependent measures in Studies 1a-1e. In Studies 1f-1g, this measure followed the close-ended measures testing our secondary closet and costs of concealment hypotheses but preceded our close-ended measure of identity suspicion.

A team of research assistants unaware of the research hypotheses and conditions, coded these open-ended responses (excluding Study 1c because it tested a boundary condition) for three markers of identity suspicion: whether participants (a) explicitly said Steve had another (non-straight) sexuality/sexual orientation (e.g., gay, bisexual), (b) described Steve as being in the closet or hiding his sexuality, or (c) implied that Steve was not straight without directly saying so. Each pair of coders agreed on 91–98 % of their judgments, achieving kappas between .68 and .78 on average. Disagreements between coders were resolved by retaining the modal judgment across the three coders. (The first author also directly resolved 12 instances in which all coders disagreed about which specific sexual identity, if any, participants attributed to Steve.)

Identity Suspicion. Our primary dependent variable was participants' perceived likelihood that "Steve is straight,"[5] rated on a sliding scale from 0 % (*No chance at all*) to 100 % (*Absolutely guaranteed*) and then reverse-scored to create an index of identity suspicion. Sliders were set at a starting position of 50 % (*Maybe/Maybe not*) to avoid directional bias.

Peer Identity Suspicion. Participants in Studies 1f and 1g rated the likelihood of identity suspicion among Steve's peers (i.e., "If other students at Steve's school learned about his interest in fashion, how likely do you think it is that they would question that he is straight?") from 0 (*Not at all likely*) to 4 (*Extremely likely*).

Perceived Incentive to Closet. Next, participants in Studies 1f and 1g rated their perceptions of the incentive to closet gender-nonconformity (i.e., "How much do you think Steve is motivated to [conceal his interest in fashion/avoid acknowledging how he feels about Connor] from his peers?") from 0 (*Not at all motivated*) to 4 (*Extremely motivated*). Higher ratings on this measure imply the existence of a secondary closet incentivizing straight-identified individuals to conceal gender nonconformity, similar to how the primary closet incentivizes sexual minorities to conceal their sexuality.

Downstream Costs. To assess potential downstream costs of stigmatizing environments, participants in Study 1f also read a vignette (see OSM Appendix E) about Steve's art teacher encouraging him to enter an art competition for a £500 scholarship, which involved displaying his artwork alongside his name in a highly visible school location. Next, participants estimated his likelihood of entering the competition from *extremely likely* to *extremely unlikely* (scored from −2.5 to 2.5, so higher scores indicate a more probable cost).

Moderators. Using mega-analytic tests of moderation, we examined potential confounds, covariates, and moderators contained in at least two samples. For concision, here we present the one theoretically relevant significant moderator (for full analyses see OSM Appendix L).

Friends' Attitudes Toward Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) People. Each experiment collected two measures of attitudes toward LGB people. For the first, participants' reports about their immediate social network's attitudes served as a proxy for their own, given the well-established tendency for people to affiliate with similar others (i.e., homophily) in network science (e.g., Mcpherson et al., 2001). To minimize demand characteristics and socially desirable responding, we did not query participants' own attitudes.

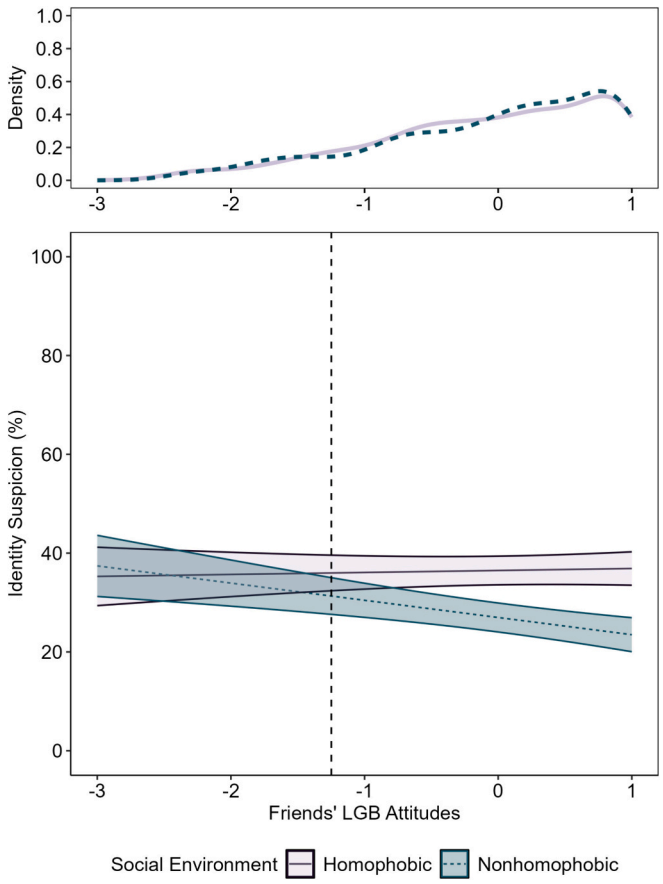

Fig. 1. Friends' LGB Attitudes Moderate the Effect of Social Environment on Identity Suspicion.
Note. LGB = lesbian, gay, and bisexual. The upper panel of the plot displays density (i.e., frequency) distributions of friends' LGB attitudes (standardized), and the lower panel depicts identity suspicion as a function of social environment, moderated by friends' LGB attitudes, in Study 1. Error bands indicate 95 % confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line marks the lower bound (1.25 *SD*s below the mean of friends' LGB attitudes) of the Johnson-Neyman region of significance for the social environment effect on identity suspicion (Preacher et al., 2006).

We asked about friends' attitudes in two ways. Participants were prompted to indicate "what your friends' general attitudes are toward gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual people" using an emoticon slider ranging from a frown (−2) to a smile (2), and to rate "How similar would you say the attitudes of your closest friends (currently) are to the attitudes toward homosexuality that McCormack (2011) observed among students at Standard High?" from *Extremely dissimilar* (−3) to *Extremely similar* (3). In the homophobic condition we reverse-scored similarity ratings so that, across conditions, this measure indexed participants' closest friends' active LGB acceptance and allyship behaviors (resembling boys in the nonhomophobic environment). Most participants said their friends had pro-LGB attitudes on each measure (*M*s = 0.96 & 0.93, respectively). Because these two measures were strongly correlated, $r(2055) = .61$, $p < .001$, and showed parallel moderating effects, we standardized and combined them (see distribution in Fig. 1).

3.2. Results and discussion

Following Curran and Hussong (2009), we first tested for between-study heterogeneity in identity suspicion ratings potentially arising

[5] Participants also rated the likelihood of Steve being bisexual and gay (see OSM Appendices C & D) and their certainty regarding his sexuality (see OSM Appendix I). Environment effects on bisexual/gay likelihoods (see OSM Appendix F) and certainty judgments (see OSM Appendix I) paralleled findings for identity suspicion.

from minor design differences across experiments within Study 1: profile type (fashion vs. same-sex friendship), inclusion of suspicion licensing statement (Studies 1a-1c), history effects, presence of a coming out statement within the environment description (absent in Study 1f), and placement of the identity suspicion variable relative to other dependent measures. No design features were significantly associated with identity suspicion and were thus not tested further (see OSM Appendix K).

For moderation models, we effects-coded social environments (−1 = nonhomophobic; 1 = homophobic), mean-centered continuous moderators at the sample level, and effects-coded dichotomous moderators. Separate multi-level models regressed identity suspicion on social environment, each potential moderator (see OSM Appendix L), and their interaction, nested within samples to allow for sample-level error variance (Costafreda, 2009). We approximated Cohen's *d* for interaction terms using Formula 3 from Rosenthal and Rubin (2003).

3.2.1. Primary analyses: social environment effects on identity suspicion

We first assessed how often participants mentioned identity suspicion in their open-ended impressions of Steve and whether this frequency varied by social environment. More participants mentioned at least one form of identity suspicion after reading that Steve claimed to be straight within a homophobic social environment (25 %) versus a nonhomophobic social environment (11 %), χ^2 (N = 1849, df = 1) = 59.25, $p < .001$. In follow-up tests, identity suspicion increased in homophobic relative to nonhomophobic environments when the open-ended measure was asked first (Studies 1a, 1b, 1d, & 1e; 31 % vs. 14 %), χ^2 (N = 994, df = 1) = 24.78, $p < .001$, and when it was asked fifth, following measures of secondary closets and costs of concealment (but preceding identity suspicion ratings; Studies 1f & 1g; 19 % & 8 %), χ^2 (N = 855, df = 1) = 36.45, $p < .001$. That this environment effect on identity suspicion was descriptively larger (not smaller) when the open-ended question came earlier in the survey suggests it emerged spontaneously, not just when made salient by related questions.

Turning to our mega-analysis of identity suspicion ratings, more identity suspicion emerged in the homophobic (M = 38.10, SD = 25.97) than nonhomophobic (M = 29.21, SD = 24.84) environment, b = 8.89 [6.70, 11.07], t(2050.7) = 7.97, $p < .001$, g = 0.35 [0.26, 0.44], as hypothesized. Within the individual experiments, homophobic environments produced higher identity suspicion ratings than nonhomophobic ones with respect to a young man who self-identified as straight and described his love of fashion (Studies 1a, 1d, & 1f) or a close same-sex friendship (Studies 1b, 1e, & 1g), but not in the boundary condition where he described sexual experimentation with another young man (Study 1c, g = 0.22 [−0.05, 0.49]; see effect sizes by study in Table 1). Parallel findings emerged from analyses addressing non-normality (see OSM Appendix G) and non-additivity (see OSM Appendix H) in identity suspicion ratings.

Further clarifying the nature of this environment effect, the control condition in Study 1b, which did not mention homophobia, elicited comparable identity suspicion levels to the nonhomophobic environment, whereas the mixed-homophobia control conditions in Studies 1d and 1e elicited identity suspicion levels almost exactly half-way between those for the homophobic and nonhomophobic environments (see OSM Appendix D).

3.2.2. Moderation analyses

The effect of social environment on identity suspicion ratings persisted when controlling for the influence of each potential confound, covariate, and moderator, demonstrating the robustness of the social environmental effect on identity suspicion. Two variables significantly moderated the effect of social environment on identity suspicion (for details, see OSM Appendix L): believability of the information about the school environment and friends' LGB attitudes. Only the latter was theoretically relevant, so we report it here.

Friends' LGB Attitudes. The social environment effect on suspicion emerged both among participants who rated their friends' LGB attitudes as relatively less positive (–1*SD* from the mean), b = 1.93 [0.40, 3.47], t(2047.4) = 2.47, p = .014, $d \approx 0.11$ [0.02, 0.20], and as more positive (+1*SD*), b = 7.07 [5.54, 8.61], t(2049.5) = 9.03, $p < .001$, $d \approx 0.40$ [0.31, 0.49], but was stronger (about four times larger) when these friends had positive (vs. negative) LGB attitudes, b = 2.87 [1.66, 4.09], t(2049.3) = 4.64, $p < .001$, $d \approx 0.21$ [0.12, 0.29] (see Fig. 1). More positive friends' LGB attitudes predicted less suspicion within the nonhomophobic environment, b = −5.40 [−7.08, −3.71], t(2048.0) = 6.29, $p < .001$, $d \approx -0.28$ [−0.37, −0.19], but not the homophobic environment, b = 0.34 [−1.41, 2.09], t(2048.0) = 0.39, p = .700, $d \approx 0.02$ [−0.07, 0.10].

3.2.3. Secondary closets and costs of concealment

Consistent with our theorizing about secondary closets, participants anticipated a higher likelihood of peer identity suspicion and a stronger perceived incentive to closet gender-nonconformity in a homophobic (vs. nonhomophobic) environment in Studies 1f and 1g, as well as more downstream costs in Study 1f (see Table 3).

An initial mediation model provided correlational evidence that perceived incentive to closet mediated effects of stigmatizing social environments on identity suspicion (see Fig. 2a). On an exploratory basis, a theory-based serial mediation model tested whether participants' perceived likelihood of peer identity suspicion (statistically) explained their perceptions of Steve's incentive to conceal his love of fashion in a secondary closet and whether this process mediated the effect of the environment on their perception of downstream costs (see Fig. 2b). A significant total indirect effect emerged, b = 0.29 [0.19, 0.40], driven by the significant indirect effect via perceived incentive to closet and the serial path via both mediators. An alternate model switching the mediators' order was not supported (see OSM Appendix J). These results are compatible with our theorizing: The homophobic (vs. nonhomophobic) environment increased the perceived likelihood of peers being suspicious of a young man's claim to be straight, which uniquely predicted increased perceptions of his incentive to conceal gender nonconformity in a secondary closet, and in turn increased the perceived likelihood of him sacrificing the opportunity of the art competition.

3.3. Summary

Supporting the identity suspicion hypothesis, participants espoused more identity suspicion—doubting the claimed straight identity of a young man with gender-nonconforming attributes—in the homophobic than nonhomophobic environment. Moderation results suggest that identity suspicion can emerge independent of personal prejudice (insofar as prejudice of one's close friends approximates variation in individuals' own prejudice levels). That friends' LGB attitudes did not affect identity suspicion in the homophobic environment aligns with our theorizing that—given the incentivized closeting of being gay in homophobic environments—the attributionally logical response to Steve's claim to be straight is identity suspicion, regardless of personal attitudes. Indeed, the greater suspicion of a high school teen's identification as straight in a homophobic context aligns with the realities of where and when people are more likely to be in the closet. Research using big data methods estimates that in homophobic states like Mississippi, 4–5 % of adolescent males who identify as straight on social media actually have same-sex attractions, compared to only 1 % of straight-identifying males in more tolerant settings like Bay Area California ((tevens-Davidowitz, 2017). We return to this point in the General Discussion.

Studies 1f and 1g provide initial evidence that people perceive homophobic environments to create secondary closets by driving straight-identifying men to conceal their gender nonconformity for fear of not being perceived as straight. Participants in Study 1f also said a homophobic environment would make a straight-identified young man only "slightly likely" (vs. "moderately likely" in the nonhomophobic environment) to pursue a scholarship opportunity. Exploratory mediation

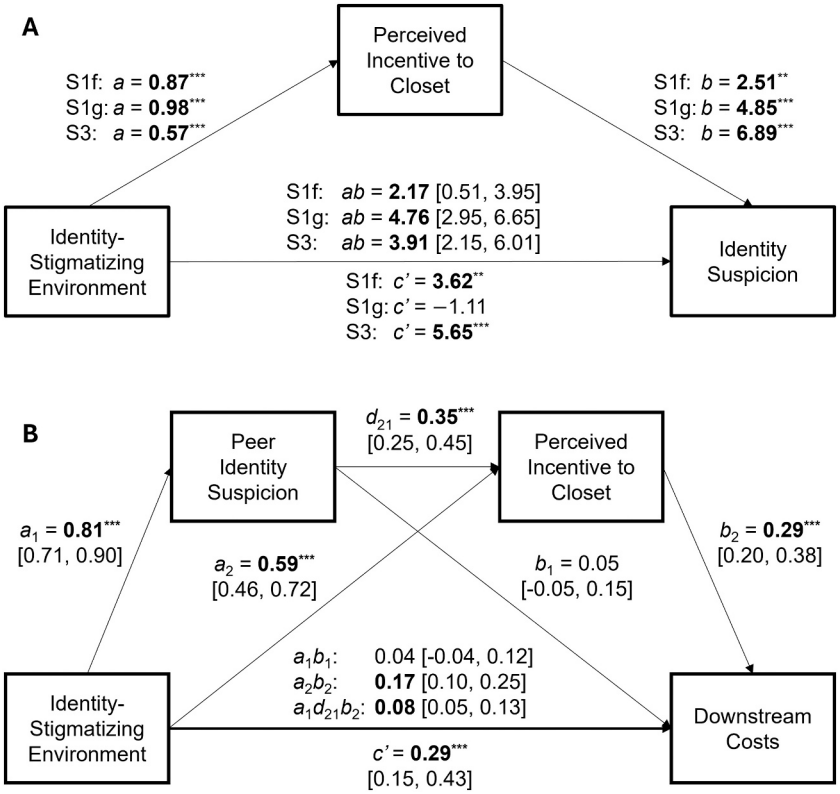

Fig. 2. Mediation of Social Environment Effects on Identity Suspicion and Downstream Costs.
Note. S = study. Identity-stigmatizing environment = −1 (Nonhomophobic) or 1 (Homophobic). Downstream costs (Panel b) were assessed only in Study 1 f. Path coefficients are unstandardized parameters, bolded if significant, with bootstrapped 95 % CIs.
** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

analyses suggested this cost was partially explained by Steve's incentive to conceal his gender nonconformity in a secondary closet.

4. Study 2

Our mega-analytic results provide robust initial evidence that homophobic—but not nonhomophobic—environments foster identity suspicion. At the same time, they do not present the strictest test of identity suspicion. Across samples, Steve's profile included identity cue inconsistencies, which should activate suspicious mindsets among observers (Fein, 1996) and trigger questions about his "true" identity. Hence, the suspicion observed in these samples could stem from the environment, Steve's profile, or a combination of the two. Study 2 provides a stricter test of identity suspicion by contrasting the gender-nonconforming profile with a gender-conforming one. This gender-conforming profile clarifies whether a homophobic (vs. nonhomophobic) environment alone is sufficient to trigger observers' identity suspicion, even of individuals without attributes associated with gay men.

In line with our reasoning, we tested the following hypotheses: identity suspicion will (a) increase in homophobic (vs. nonhomophobic) environments (i.e., *identity suspicion hypothesis*); (b) increase when the focal individual has gender-nonconforming (vs. -conforming) interests; and (c) vary interactively as a function of gender (non)conformity and the social environment (*amplified suspicion hypothesis*). Specifically, we anticipated more identity suspicion when the focal individual has gender-nonconforming interests and is situated in the homophobic environment, as opposed to when only one of these conditions holds. The most relevant test, however, is the environmental effect for the gender-conforming individual. If identity-stigmatizing environments trigger broad suspicion of claims to unmarked identities, participants should report more identity suspicion of even the gender-conforming individual in the homophobic (vs. nonhomophobic) environment.

4.1. Method

Study 2 used a 2 (social environment: nonhomophobic vs. homophobic) × 2 (profile: gender-conforming vs. gender-nonconforming) factorial design.

4.1.1. Participants and procedure

Consistent with our target sample size of 400, we retained 410 participants (see Table 2 for demographics and exclusions). We randomly assigned participants to view the stimuli noted below. A sensitivity analysis for simple effects using *t*-tests ($n = 204$, $\alpha = 0.05$, two-tailed) revealed we had 80 % power to detect an effect of $d = 0.39$.

Stimulus Materials. We retained the nonhomophobic and homophobic environments from Study 1, added a gender-conforming profile, and minorly revised the gender-nonconforming profile.

Profiles. We removed some emotional expressivity from the gender-nonconforming profile (i.e., love of fashion) to better mirror the gender-conforming profile, maximizing cross-condition internal validity (see OSM Appendix O for details). Notably, removing elements of emotional expressivity also decreased the extent of gender-nonconformity.

Participants in the gender-conforming condition read that Steve loved rugby and offered to take the interviewer to a match. In the interview segment about sexuality, he said, "I'm straight" (see OSM Appendix O for exact wording). This profile focused on rugby, a very physical and sometimes violent sport (Nauright & Chandler, 1996), because both sports and physical aggression are stereotypically linked to masculinity (e.g., Anderson & McGuire, 2010; Berke et al., 2017; Levant et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2015).

Table 4
Identity Suspicion by Social Environment and Gender Nonconformity (Study 2).

	Social environment		Marginal *M* (*SD*)	
Profile	Nonhomophobic	Homophobic		Effect *g* [95 % CI]
GNC (fashion)	17.93 (19.14)	37.36 (25.82)	27.46 (24.61)	0.85*** [0.57, 1.14]
GC (rugby)	15.05 (18.65)	26.03 (21.09)	20.59 (20.62)	0.55*** [0.27, 0.83]
Marginal *M* (*SD*)	16.52 (18.91)	31.64 (24.17)	–	0.70*** [0.50, 0.90]
Effect *g* [95 % CI]	0.15 [−0.12, 0.43]	0.48*** [0.20, 0.76]	0.30*** [0.11, 0.50]	

Note. GNC = gender nonconforming; GC = gender conforming. Cells report means (with parenthetical standard deviations); adjacent tests of main and simple effects compare the first two means in each row or column.

4.1.2. Measures

Participants completed the open-ended impressions measure from Study 1 ($M_{Kappa} = 0.68$, $SD = 0.07$, range: 0.58–0.78) and the identity suspicion measure from Studies 1d-1g; peer identity suspicion and incentive to closet were not assessed (for all measures see OSM Appendix P).

4.2. Results and discussion

4.2.1. Primary analyses

Replicating Study 1, more participants questioned Steve's identity claim when he was situated within a homophobic social environment (22 %) than a nonhomophobic social environment (4 %), χ^2 ($N = 410$, $df = 1$) = 26.94, $p < .001$. Consistent with our amplification hypothesis, we observed a descriptively larger environment-related increase in identity suspicion when he exhibited gender-nonconforming attributes, including love of fashion (homophobic: 29 %; nonhomophobic: 6 %), χ^2 ($N = 206$, $df = 1$) = 19.31, $p < .001$, than when he exhibited gender-conforming attributes, including love of rugby (homophobic: 15 %; nonhomophobic: 3 %), χ^2 ($N = 204$, $df = 1$) = 8.52, $p = .004$.

We conducted a social environment × profile factorial ANOVA on identity suspicion ratings to test our hypotheses (see means and effect sizes in Table 4).[6] Replicating the mega-analysis, participants expressed more suspicion of Steve's sexuality when he was situated in the homophobic compared to nonhomophobic social environment, $F(1, 406) = 52.00$, $p < .001$. Also, participants expressed more suspicion of Steve's sexuality when they read the gender-nonconforming than gender-conforming profile, $F(1, 406) = 11.36$, $p < .001$. These main effects were qualified by the two-way interaction predicted by our amplified suspicion hypothesis, $F(1, 406) = 4.01$, $p = .046$ (see Fig. 3).

Tests of simple effects supported our hypotheses. Maximal identity suspicion emerged for the gender-nonconforming profile in the homophobic environment, relative to the (a) gender-conforming profile in the homophobic environment, $F(1,202) = 11.80$, $p = .001$, and (b) gender-nonconforming profile in the nonhomophobic environment, $F(1, 204) = 37.82$, $p < .001$. Conversely, in the nonhomophobic environment, Steve's gender-(non)conforming attributes did not affect identity suspicion, $F(1, 204) = 1.20$, $p = .275$.

The key social environment effect for the gender-conforming profile mirrored—though less strongly—the difference observed for the gender-nonconforming profile. Even for a young man who liked rugby—a masculine sport—and whose identity cues consistently implied he was straight, suspicion about his sexuality increased when he was situated in a homophobic (vs. nonhomophobic) environment, $F(1, 202) = 15.50$, $p < .001$. This result provides strong evidence for our theory of identity suspicion by demonstrating that identity-stigmatizing environments can call into question even gender-conforming individuals' claims to non-stigmatized identities. Here, these results suggest that homophobic environments render suspicious potentially any man's claim to be straight, even when he embodies traditionally masculine (i.e., gender-conforming) behaviors and attributes.

4.2.2. Exploratory analysis

On an exploratory basis, we conducted a follow-up contrast testing whether a gender-nonconforming profile or the homophobic environment triggered more identity suspicion by comparing the conditions with only one of these features. The gender-conforming profile in the homophobic environment ($M = 26.03$, $SD = 21.09$) produced more identity suspicion than the gender-nonconforming profile in the nonhomophobic environment ($M = 17.93$, $SD = 19.14$), $M_{Difference} = 8.10$ [2.59, 13.60], $t(203.3$, equal variances not assumed) = 2.90, $p = .004$, $g = 0.40$ [0.13, 0.67]. Thus, the social environmental effect was sufficiently strong that a young man with stereotypically straight interests in a homophobic environment aroused more identity suspicion than a young man with stereotypically gay interests in a nonhomophobic environment. This provocative result is exploratory, meriting cautious interpretation.

4.3. Summary

That a stereotypically masculine young man's claim to be straight would vary as a function of environmental homophobia may at first seem counterintuitive but aligns with our theorizing of identity suspicion. Our results imply that homophobic environments not only oppress sexual minorities but also negatively affect the sexual majority (here, straight men) by subjecting them to suspicion, even when they embody stereotypically masculine interests. This implication does not equate straight and gay men's experience of homophobic environments, but rather it helps illuminate why many men are powerfully incentivized to strictly police their gender expression by concealing any gender-nonconforming attributes in a secondary closet. Finally, the nonhomophobic environment enabled comparable trust in the focal individual's claim to be straight, regardless of his gender-(non)conforming interests. This finding suggests eliminating homophobia liberates not only gay men, but also straight men, by freeing all men to express their attributes without having their sexuality questioned.

5. Study 3

Our first eight experiments tested our identity suspicion hypotheses using homophobic environments and men's gender nonconformity. Choosing a current social context increased psychological realism and participants' likely possession of cultural knowledge about how gender nonconformity shapes perceptions of sexuality in this context. Conceivably, however, variability in participants' pre-existing cultural knowledge may have affected responses. In contrast, our final study provided all participants with the same information about cultural associations between behaviors and group membership, focusing on a remote historical context, namely, Jewish persecution in medieval Spain leading up to the Spanish Inquisition. Participants' unfamiliarity with the origins of the Inquisition (see the OSM Appendix M) allowed us to

[6] Given moderate heterogeneity of variance, $F(3, 406) = 10.95$, $p < .001$, (but variance-ratio < 4; Howell, 2013), simple effects analyses used restricted (rather than pooled) error terms; no further corrections were applied.

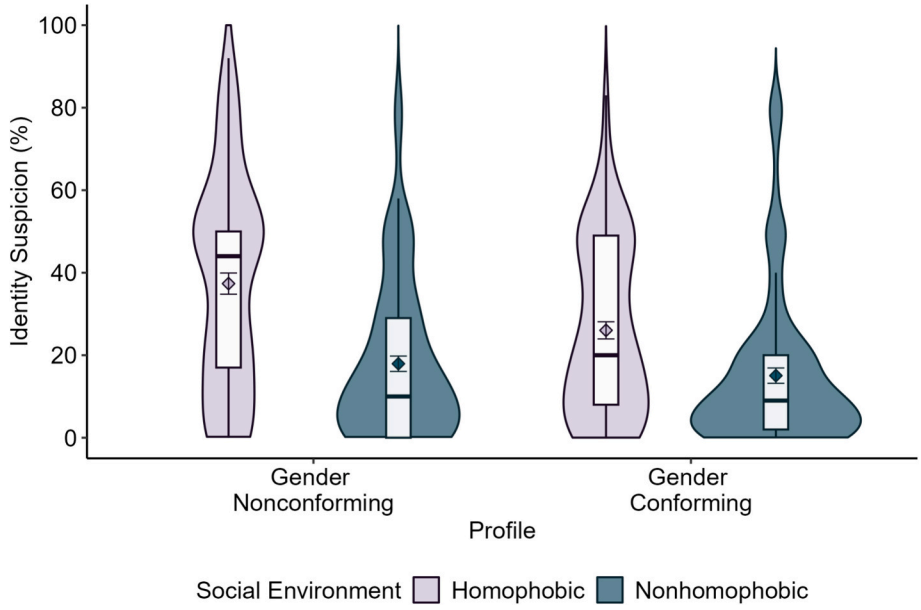

Fig. 3. Social Environment and Profile Interactively Predict Identity Suspicion in Study 2.
Note. Violin plots depict the data distribution in each condition. Boxplots depict the median and interquartile range. Diamonds indicate condition means with restricted *SE* error bars.

test—without personal knowledge confounds—whether experimentally varying participants' understanding of the identity stigmatization that Jews faced in Spain would lead them to express the same general kinds of identity suspicion that contributed to the Spanish Inquisition.

Recall our proposition that identity suspicion includes three critical components: a concealable marked identity, a social environment stigmatizing this identity (creating the self-protective incentive to deny it), and social coding of certain behaviors as markers of the concealable identity. In this historical context, being a *nominal* Christian (secretly practicing Judaism) was the concealable marked identity and being an authentic Christian the unmarked identity. Accordingly, we created a profile of a man who identified as a Christian but displayed certain private behaviors more common among Jews (hence, nonconforming for Christians). We situated this man in either an identity-stigmatizing social environment like the one preceding the Spanish Inquisition (hereafter the *Jewish persecution environment*), or an identity-affirming *religious tolerance* environment modeled on *la convivencia* (i.e., coexistence), an earlier time of Muslim rule when Jews and Christians were essentially (second-class) equals and living in relative peace (Castro, 1971; Wolf, 2009).

Per the identity suspicion hypothesis, we predicted that when this man ostensibly lived during a period of Jewish persecution (vs. religious tolerance), fewer participants would believe his claim to be Christian. In accordance with the secondary closet hypothesis, we predicted that in this environment participants would expect his community to be more suspicious of his religious identity and perceive him as more incentivized to closet his Christian-nonconforming behaviors. This study tests whether merely providing contemporary participants with information about the extreme stigmatization Jews faced in this period—without referencing the Spanish Inquisition or its history—suffices to foment the kinds of suspicion that fueled the Inquisition.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and procedures

We aimed for a slightly larger sample to increase power for testing identity suspicion in a new domain, retaining 341 participants (see Table 2 for demographics and exclusions). A sensitivity analysis using *t*-tests ($\alpha = 0.05$, two-tailed) revealed we had 80 % power to detect an effect of $d = 0.30$.

Stimulus Materials. Revised study content addressed religious identity in medieval Spain, with participants randomly assigned to one of two social environment conditions (identity-stigmatizing vs. non-stigmatizing).

Social Environments. Participants read a social environment description presented as a Spanish history textbook excerpt (O'Callaghan, 1975). In the Jewish persecution condition, participants read that Christian oppression of Jewish individuals included forced conversions, legal restrictions, periodic mob violence, and that "openly identifying as Jewish during this period was very dangerous." In the religious tolerance condition, participants read that during Muslim rule, "openly identifying as Christian or Jewish … was not considered dangerous," and although both groups were second-class citizens, they were equally allowed to practice their religious faith, and "could fully participate in the social and economic life of society" (for exact wording see OSM Appendix N). Anticipating participants' unfamiliarity with specifics of the Spanish Inquisition and *la convivencia*, we used carefully balanced descriptions to shape their impressions of these periods and controlled for reported prior knowledge of these periods.

Profile. All participants read a profile of Josephus, a Spanish man raised as a Christian by *converso* parents (i.e., Jewish converts to Christianity) and married to a converso woman. Josephus publicly identified as a Christian, raised his children as Christians, and regularly attended a Christian church with his family. The profile described a historian's analysis of Josephus's letters, noting his private enactment of certain practices more common among the Jews of his day than Christians (e.g., circumcision of sons, Hebrew usage, avoiding pork). The historian noted, however, that in professional and official correspondence, Josephus identified himself as a Christian and signed his name with the common Christian symbol of a fish.

Several profile features bear mentioning. First, although each stereotypically Jewish behavior constituted grounds for criminal investigation during the Spanish Inquisition (Kamen, 2014; Netanyahu, 1999) and has connections to Jewish culture, none is diagnostic of religious identity. Second, Josephus' explicit claim to be a Christian, together with the behavioral and life history cues we provided, should lead participants to primarily associate him with Christianity. Josephus' claim to be Christian while retaining some customary Jewish practices

was thus intended to create the kind of cue inconsistency that could trigger suspicions when situated in an identity-stigmatizing setting.

5.1.2. Measures

After reading the environment and profile descriptions, everyone completed measures of identity suspicion, peer identity suspicion, perceived incentive to closet, and measures of various potential confounds, moderators, and covariates (see OSM Appendix M for details).

Identity Suspicion. Participants rated the likelihood that (a) "Josephus's personal faith is Christian," and (b) "Josephus's personal faith is Jewish" using the same 0–100 scale from prior studies. Reverse-scored ratings of the likelihood that he was Christian indexed identity suspicion. We report analyses of only our main hypotheses (see OSM Appendices F—I for additional analyses).

Peer Identity Suspicion. Participants rated the likelihood of identity suspicion among Josephus's peers (i.e., "If other people in Josephus's city learned about the Jewish customs he practiced, how likely do you think it is that they would question that Josephus is a Christian?") from 0 (*Not at all likely*) to 4 (*Extremely likely*).

Perceived Incentive to Closet. Next, participants indicated how incentivized they perceived Josephus would have been to conceal his customary Jewish practices from his peers from 0 (*Not at all motivated*) to 4 (*Extremely motivated*). As in Studies 1f and 1g, this measure and peer identity suspicion assess our secondary closet hypothesis.

5.2. Results and discussion

5.2.1. Primary analyses

As predicted by the identity suspicion hypothesis, participants were more suspicious of Josephus' Christian identity when he was described as living during a period of Jewish persecution ($M = 51.03$, $SD = 29.79$) than religious tolerance ($M = 31.91$, $SD = 24.39$), $F(1, 339) = 42.03$, $p < .001$, $g = 0.70$ [0.48, 0.92].[7] Environment effects on suspicion also held when covarying for demographics and relevant knowledge or attitudes (see OSM Appendix M). Consistent with our secondary closet hypothesis, participants also believed Josephus' community would be more suspicious of his religious identity, $F(1, 339) = 43.17$, $p < .001$, $g = 0.71$ [0.49, 0.93], and that he would be more strongly incentivized to closet these behaviors, $F(1, 339) = 99.45$, $p < .001$, $g = 1.07$ [0.85, 1.30], when he was described as living in an environment of Jewish persecution ($M_{\text{PeerSuspicion}} = 2.91$, $SD = 1.05$; $M_{\text{IncentivedCloset}} = 3.02$, $SD = 1.03$) versus religious tolerance ($M_{\text{PeerSuspicion}} = 2.17$, $SD = 1.04$; $M_{\text{IncentivedCloset}} = 1.89$, $SD = 1.08$).

5.2.2. Exploratory analyses: mediation

Study 3 did not measure any downstream costs of identity suspicion, so no serial mediation was tested, but exploratory mediation analyses confirmed that perceived incentive to closet mediated effects of stigmatizing social environments on identity suspicion (see Fig. 2a). This mediation pattern, replicating Studies 1f and 1g, aligns with our theorizing about perceived incentive to closet as a potential mechanism by which stigmatizing environments foster identity suspicion.

6. Integrating results

We compared the distributions of participants' identity suspicion ratings in key environments across all nine samples in Studies 1–3. We calculated percentile ranks of identity suspicion ratings within the nonhomophobic and homophobic environments in Studies 1 and 2 and within the religious tolerance and Jewish persecution environments in Study 3 (see Fig. 4). Identity suspicion ratings diverged early in both paradigms, such that from the 10th percentile onward, the identity-stigmatizing environments produced more identity suspicion than the identity-affirming environments. Both paradigms retained this environmental split until the 100th percentile, suggesting the effect of social environment on identity suspicion is robust across much (at least 90 %) of the response distribution.

7. General discussion

Fundamentally, this work explores people's intuitive theories of the closet. We posit that people intuitively recognize not only that identity-stigmatizing environments incentivize concealment of these identities in the proverbial closet, but also that awareness of this incentive raises questions about others' public claims to contrasting, non-stigmatized identities, a phenomenon we refer to as identity suspicion.

Experiments across nine samples provided evidence consistent with our identity suspicion, amplified suspicion, and secondary closet hypotheses. Specifically, observers were more suspicious of an individual's claim to have a non-stigmatized identity (i.e., straight, Christian) if the claim was made in an environment where the contrasting marked identity (i.e., gay, Jewish) was stigmatized. By contrast, in a non-stigmatizing environment, observers were significantly less suspicious of the identity claim. Predictably, this environment effect emerged most strongly for individuals with attributes stereotypically associated with the stigmatized identity, but it persisted even when the individual's attributes were stereotypically associated with the contrasting *non-stigmatized* identity (Study 2).

7.1. Contexts of identity suspicion

This work demonstrates that identity suspicion reliably arises in identity stigmatizing environments. Still, the tightly controlled experiments in our studies leave open the question of identity suspicion's generalizability outside these specific study designs. Insofar as male sexuality is concerned, identity suspicion appears to be a robust phenomenon. West et al.'s (2021) research on fragile heterosexuality finds that straight men's sexuality is particularly easily questioned. Their first study showed participants a profile of a man that experimentally varied whether his sexuality was straight or gay and then asked participants to rate their perceptions of the man on various traits, including his sexuality (100-point sliding scale from 100 % gay to 100 % straight). On average, people believed the profile less when it said the man was straight (87.89 %) versus gay (94.37 %). Put differently, people were more suspicious—at a baseline—of a man claiming to be straight than gay. The rest of the study demonstrated that people were especially likely to question a straight man's sexuality if he kissed a man, relative to a gay man kissing a woman. Similarly, Bosson et al. (2023) showed that men, relative to women, are perceived as less straight for engaging in a variety of behaviors (i.e., from dancing to having oral sex) with someone of the same sex, and this difference is particularly strong for *less* sexually explicit behavior (like dancing). Together, these papers demonstrate that claims of a straight identity are more fragile than claims of a gay identity, especially for men.

Relative to identity suspicion, these studies suggest that people readily question sexuality claims. This finding aligns with social marking theory. In identity stigmatizing environments, the incentive to conceal translates into a stronger belief in identity claims of stigmatized identities because people are incentivized to do the opposite. This theorizing also suggests that there may be some baseline awareness of the concealment pressures associated with homophobic environments within West et al. (2021) and Bosson et al.'s (2023) studies.

The homophobic high school described in Studies 1 and 2 may resonate with certain readers and may seem outdated to others. Yet, despite the many social gains in the last two decades for U.S. LGBTQ+ communities, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show little change in the rates of homophobic bullying and find that

[7] Similarly, Welch's $F(1, 328.4) = 42.17$, $p < .001$, given a Levene's homogeneity violation, $F(1, 339) = 9.32$, $p = .002$. Correcting for non-additive estimates produced convergent results (see OSM Appendix H).

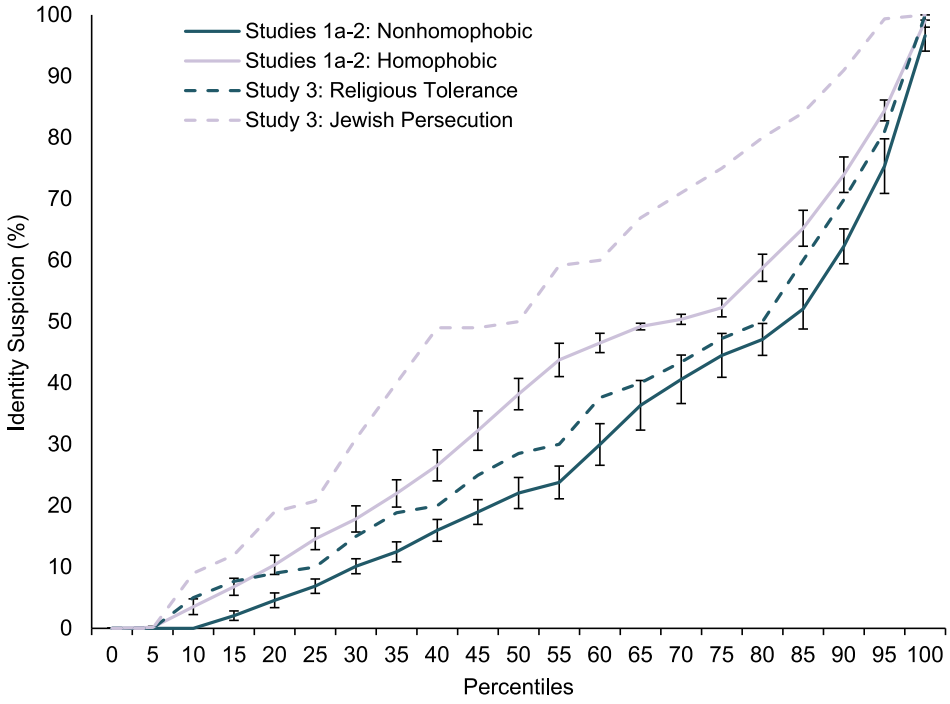

Fig. 4. Percentile Ranks of Identity Suspicion by Social Environment Across Studies.
Note. For Studies 1a-2 (all eight samples), average percentile ranks of the (non)homophobic social environments are presented. Error bars represent *SEs*.

sexual minority students are still more likely than straight students to be bullied (Mittleman, 2023).

The results of Studies 1 and 2 do not suggest men's claims to be straight are always called into question (but see West et al., 2021, Study 1). Rather, these studies demonstrate that when observers are aware of the incentive to conceal a stigmatized identity—created by identity stigmatizing social environments—they become suspicious of such claims. These findings also resonate with the authors' and likely many readers' lived experiences of growing up in such environments and the wealth of observational studies demonstrating the pervasiveness of such environments. For example, boys and men frequently question each other's claims of being straight in everyday contexts like the schoolyard and the locker room (e.g., Anderson, 2009; Mittleman, 2023; Pascoe, 2007; Short, 2013). These contexts are frequently characterized by men's homophobia (Epstein, 1997; Pascoe, 2005; Taylor et al., 2011). Recent U.S. population-based evidence suggests gender-nonconforming boys are 3.5 times more likely than other boys to experience homophobic bullying, regardless of their sexuality (Mittleman, 2023). Another intriguing demonstration of identity suspicion comes from analyses of Google traffic patterns that found searches posing the question, "Is my husband gay?" are much more frequent within U.S. states with higher levels of anti-gay norms (Stevens-Davidowitz, 2017). As such, we conclude that identity suspicion is pervasive but not entrenched in any one setting. Identity affirming social networks may go a long way in shielding people from experiencing identity suspicion.

7.2. Contributions to understanding concealable stigma

The existing interdisciplinary literature on concealable stigma documents negative personal and social consequences associated with concealment. Personally, having a concealable stigmatized identity predicts negative psychological, physical, and behavioral consequences (e.g., Eribon, 2004; Flentje et al., 2020; Frost et al., 2015; Meyer, 1995; Meyer et al., 2021; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2011; Wu et al., 2017), as does engaging in identity management coping strategies (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Follmer & Jones, 2021; Hastuti & Timming, 2021; Moore & Tangney, 2017; Perlson et al., 2021; Sedlovskaya et al., 2013). Socially, people trust those who conceal less, are less willing to date or hire them, and view them as less moral (John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016; Le Forestier, Page-Gould, & Chasteen, 2022; Olanubi, 2019). The present research extends this work by highlighting that the stigmatization of a concealable identity creates a climate of suspicion that calls potentially anyone's claim to the contrasting non-stigmatized identity into doubt and pressures individuals with the non-stigmatized identity to actively conceal aspects of themselves that may trigger suspicion of their "true" identity.

While our work builds on research examining concealment of stigmatized identities, it pivots to focus on social observers' intuitive understanding that identity stigmatizing environments incentivize identity concealment and examines how this foundation gives rise to identity suspicion. Whereas prior work identifies (often decontextualized) behavioral and appearance cues used to infer concealable sexual and religious identities (e.g., Ambady et al., 1999; Freeman et al., 2010; Rule et al., 2008), our work redirects attention to social contexts that influence whether people accept others' identity claims or suspect closeting. We believe this contextual difference explains why Lick and Johnson (2016) and lt, Lick, & Johnson (2020) found evidence for a straight categorization bias while West et al. (2021) and Bosson et al. (2023) found that straight sexuality—especially for men—is particularly susceptible to suspicion. It seems logical that participants in studies examining the straight categorization bias would hesitate to attribute a stigmatized identity to an individual with so little relevant information to guide their judgment. By contrast, research that situates individuals in social contexts is more likely to demonstrate effects like those presented here because such contexts provide the narrative scaffolding to engage attributional reasoning. In real-world settings, shared knowledge of behavioral cues coded as identity markers may lead to inferences about an individual's identity arising interactively from their social environment and behavioral cues (Study 2).

7.3. Contributions to attribution theory

Our findings extend classic attribution theory principles to identity. Traditionally, attribution theorists have focused on attributions about

attitudes, abilities, beliefs, motivations, or emotions, but observers also make attributions about identity holistically, inferring religious, sexual, or political identities from observed behavior. Demonstrating the relevance of classic attribution principles to attributions of identity, Bosson et al. (2023) used the discounting principle to explain why straight men's sexuality was questioned much more than straight women's sexuality when both engaged in same-gender flirtation like dancing or giving a piggyback ride. Similarly, we applied the discounting principle to observers' attributions for others' identity claims in contexts of identity stigmatization. As hypothesized, we found that expressions of identity suspicion align with the discounting principle's logical premise that causes of behavior are discounted insofar as alternative causes exist (Kelley, 1971).

Our work suggests that rational application of the discounting principle within identity-stigmatizing environments can cast broad suspicion over people's identity claims. Merely knowing gay identity was stigmatized in a setting caused people to be suspicious about a young man's sexuality, even when he identified as and "acted" straight (Study 2). Mere awareness of prevalent homophobia may explain why men frequently question each other's claims to be straight in homophobic contexts ranging from schoolyards to locker rooms (Anderson, 2009; Pascoe, 2007; Short, 2013). In sum, these findings suggest homophobic environments carry costs not only for men who identify as sexual minorities, but also for men who identify as straight and whose identity claims consequently fall under suspicion.

7.4. Identity suspicion and observers' prejudice

If identity suspicion stems from environments stigmatizing certain concealable identities, one might assume that it also relies upon observers' own stigmatizing attitudes. Indeed, some evidence aligns with this intuition: In early face-processing research, for instance, evidence suggested anti-Semitic individuals perceive more faces as Jewish (Allport & Kramer, 1946; Gardner & Rogolsky, 1950; but see also Scodel & Austrin, 1957). Our findings, however, suggest that awareness, more so than endorsement, of stigma breeds suspicion. Mega-analytic moderation models found that ratings of friends' LGB attitudes (which served as proxies for participants' own attitudes) were unrelated to participants' identity suspicion ratings in the homophobic environment, suggesting that here suspicion does not depend on observer bias. Only in the nonhomophobic environment did higher ratings of friends' LGB attitudes correspond to lower levels of identity suspicion. Insofar as individuals' own attitudes track those of their friends, this interaction may indicate that personal prejudicial attitudes do not drive identity suspicion in stigmatizing environments (where it is rational to suspect that environmental incentives drive concealment of marked identities), whereas non-stigmatizing environments contain no grounds for suspicion, allowing personal prejudicial attitudes to exert more influence. In sum, though bias did affect suspicion in the nonhomophobic environment, the environmental effect on identity suspicion persisted over and above observers' own (implied) bias.

7.5. Identity-affirming social environments

Our research implies that identity de-stigmatization directly benefits not only members of a marked group—by reducing their oppression and enabling open identity expression without fear of harassment—but also those in the unmarked group by relieving them from having the authenticity of their identities questioned. Relatedly, negative impacts of homophobic bullying on depression and suicidal ideation are mitigated to the same extent for sexual minority and straight youth by perceptions of an LGBT-supportive school climate (Birkett et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2008). Similarly, students in schools with policies and programs that explicitly forbid victimization and violence against sexual and gender minorities report lower rates of homophobic bullying (Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Goodenow et al., 2006; Saewyc et al., 2014). Our analysis here suggests de-stigmatizing concealable marked identities eliminates the perceived incentive to closet such identities, thereby freeing individuals to express themselves unfettered by fears of having their identities misunderstood or called into question. As articulated in identity suspicion theory, where no incentive to closet a marked concealable identity exists, stereotypic behavior no longer holds diagnostic value for attributing the marked identity in the presence of an explicit claim to the unmarked identity, because individuals with the marked identity have no reason to hide it.

7.6. Implications for identity panics

History contains many notorious episodes of identity panics where suspicions of identity claims ran rampant, triggering destructive consequences (e.g., the Spanish Inquisition, Salem witch trials, McCarthyism and the Lavender Scare). Indeed, the domains we chose for studying identity suspicion—namely, sexual and religious identities—were directly inspired by some of these historical episodes in which identity suspicion literally cost individuals their livelihoods or lives. Future work should explore identity suspicions in other contexts (e.g., political identity). Ascribing such panics to irrational psychological forces, such as paranoid delusions or extreme prejudices of accusers, may be intuitively appealing (Cohn, 2000; Robins & Post, 1997). Our results, however, suggest that the widespread identity suspicion defining these episodes could reflect application of logical attribution principles in contexts that stigmatized a concealable identity. Mere awareness of this stigmatization suffices to trigger rational suspicion about individuals' claims to contrasting non-stigmatized identities, regardless of observers' own attitudes. Although the initial stigmatization of an identity may arise from irrational prejudice(s), the resulting suspicion of non-stigmatized identity claims may be entirely rational, even when such suspicions lead to widespread oppressive consequences.

Indeed, participants in Study 3 demonstrated the same patterns of suspicion that led to the Spanish Inquisition, even though our participants reported positive attitudes toward Jewish people (see OSM Appendix M), in contrast to the eliminationist anti-Semitism of that notorious period. The chilling implication of our finding is that the same suspicion of converts' authenticity that created the conditions for the Inquisition to emerge could potentially have arisen in part from rational applications of attributional logic, given mere awareness of the incentives to conceal Jewish identity in that context.

7.7. Limitations and future directions

To identify causes and consequences of identity suspicion without external confounds, this work focuses on judgments of individuals in hypothetical scenarios, raising the question of whether identity suspicion develops similarly in real-world settings. Although an important limitation, each scenario in this work derives from real social environments. For example, the nonhomophobic environment replicates almost word-for-word McCormack's (2011) description of Standard High—a real school in England—based on over 500 h of observation. Nonetheless, directly testing social environmental effects on identity suspicion in live social interactions between observers and targets remains a priority for future work.

Moreover, these studies always described the social environment before the individual situated within it. This presentation order could anchor observers' impressions of the individual in their assigned social environment, contributing to our identity suspicion findings. Presenting the individual's profile first might lead observers' own sociocultural context to exert a greater influence on initial impressions of the individual. Notably, work on suspicious mindsets (Fein, 1996) implies that the suspicion introduced by the identity-stigmatizing environment would prompt observers to effortfully evaluate all available evidence, including the context.

Finally, we acknowledge that the statistical mediation approaches

used in Studies 1f, 1g, and 3 cannot support causal claims. Although the most acute critiques concern completely correlational cross-sectional data (Montoya, 2024), even when the independent (*X*) variable is randomly assigned, questions about the causal order of the mediator(s) and outcome persist (Bullock et al., 2010). Per best practices, we report an alternate version of our serial mediation model (see OSM Appendix J), which fits the data less well than our primary model, but such model comparisons provide weaker evidence than manipulating mediators (Spencer et al., 2005).

7.8. Broader implications for challenging stigma

These results suggest the likely futility of efforts to disconfirm stereotypes about specific identities at the individual level without combatting stigma at broader environmental or societal levels. Just as efforts to eradicate sexism and racism have identified structural and systemic factors obstructing change and needing interventions at multiple levels (Adams et al., 2008; Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Schmader et al., 2020), our findings imply identity suspicion will persist until environments no longer stigmatize identities, insofar as it arises from logical attribution rules within an oppressive system. In contrast, non-stigmatizing environments eliminate the motive to closet identities and thus the structural basis for suspicious mindsets.

Relatedly, identity suspicion is primarily driven not by individual prejudice but rational attributional processes within identity-stigmatizing social environments. Anyone in such environments, regardless of their (lack of) prejudice, is susceptible to entertaining and perpetuating identity suspicion. Thus, countering identity suspicion requires both the reformation of individual bigotry *and* the removal of identity-stigmatization from the normative environment. Insofar as macro-level environmental realities give rise to identity suspicion, initiatives will flounder if they incorrectly focus only on prejudiced individuals, not realizing that *even non-prejudiced observers* in stigmatizing environments are liable to demonstrate identity suspicion.

An additional, perhaps less obvious, outcome of identity-stigmatizing environments involves the existence, awareness, and potential downstream consequences of secondary closets, in which people are incentivized to conceal any attributes socially coded as markers of a stigmatized identity. Indeed, participants perceived an individual's heightened incentive to conceal such attributes in social environments characterized by homophobia (Studies 1f and 1g) or anti-Semitism (Study 3). Thus, observers recognize the constraints of identity-stigmatizing environments for virtually everyone within them, even those who do not have the stigmatized identity but are incentivized to closet stereotypically associated behaviors and attributes.

We speculate that the constraints of identity-stigmatizing environments go beyond concealment, also motivating the enactment of behaviors meant to demonstrate unmarked identities. For example, an extensive literature on precarious manhood and masculinity threat demonstrates the deleterious effects of social pressures to enact masculinity, not only on the men subjected to such pressures (e.g., Vandello et al., 2023; Vandello & Bosson, 2013), but also on the women they may disparage, objectify, or mistreat to "prove" their masculinity (e.g., Bosson et al., 2021; Vandello et al., 2024; Vescio et al., 2025). Because homophobia continues to be a potent tool of masculinity enactment (e.g., Diefendorf & Bridges, 2020), we suggest the negative effects of masculinity threat are, at least in part, driven by homophobic social environments in which men are incentivized to demonstrate their sexuality. Future research should more explicitly test the connection between identity suspicion and harmful ideologies like precarious manhood.

8. Conclusion

Three studies, comprising nine experiments, demonstrated that social environments inform perceptions of an individual's claimed identity. When the environment stigmatized a concealable identity, participants reported greater suspicion of an individual's claim to the contrasting non-stigmatized identity, regardless of whether their attributes cued the stigmatized identity. Thus, even an individual with consistent identity cues elicited more suspicion as to their "true" identity when situated in an identity-stigmatizing (vs. non-stigmatizing) environment, underscoring the power of social environments to drive identity suspicion. Broadly, this work highlights costs of stigmatizing concealable identities, not only for people immediately targeted by such stigma, but also for many others within these identity-stigmatizing environments.

Open practices

All materials, data, and syntax files are available at https://osf.io/8b95z.

All data have been made publicly available at Open Science Framework and can be accessed at https://osf.io/8b95z. This article is based on the dissertation completed by Oakes (2020) and was presented in part at the 2018 Society for Research on Adolescence Biennial Meeting, the 19th Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, the 2017 Convention of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the 2017 Western-Waterloo-Wilfrid Laurier Social Psychology Conference, and the 7th Annual Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies Research Symposium. No conflict of interest exists. This research was supported in part by the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, awarded to Harrison Oakes. We would like to thank Abigail A. Scholer, Anne E. Wilson, Kimberley J. Lopez, and SPI Lab members for their invaluable feedback on this manuscript, as well as Soumya Garg, Jessica Hoang, Annabelle Klein, and Alyssa Nguyen for assistance with coding open-ended responses.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Harrison Oakes: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Richard P. Eibach:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Conceptualization. **Hilary B. Bergsieker:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Data curation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2025.104736.

References

Adams, G., Edkins, V., Lacka, D., Pickett, K. M., & Cheryan, S. (2008). Teaching about racism: Pernicious implications of the standard portrayal. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 30*(4), 349–361. https://doi.org/10.1080/01973530802502309

Allport, G. W., & Kramer, B. M. (1946). Some roots of prejudice. *Journal of Psychology, 22*, 9–39.

Ambady, N., Hallahan, M., & Conner, B. (1999). Accuracy of judgments of sexual orientation from thin slices of behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 538–547. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.77.3.538

Anderson, E. (2009). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. Routledge.

Anderson, E., & McGuire, R. (2010). Inclusive masculinity theory and the gendered politics of men's rugby. *Journal of Gender Studies, 19*(3), 249–261. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2010.494341

Berke, D. S., Reidy, D. E., Miller, J. D., & Zeichner, A. (2017). Take it like a man: Gender-threatened men's experience of gender role discrepancy, emotion activation, and

pain tolerance. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 18*(1), 62–69. https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000036
Berry, Z., & Frederickson, J. (2015). Explanations and implications of the fundamental attribution error: A review and proposal. *Journal of Integrated Social Sciences, 5*(1), 44–57.
Birkett, M., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. (2009). LGB and questioning students in schools: The moderating effects of homophobic bullying and school climate on negative outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*(7), 989–1000. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9389-1
Bosson, J. K., Jurek, P., Vandello, J. A., Kosakowska-Berezecka, N., Olech, M., Besta, T., … Żukauskienė, R. (2021). Psychometric properties and correlates of precarious manhood beliefs in 62 nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 52*(3), 231–258. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022121997997
Bosson, J. K., Rousis, G., & Wilkerson, M. (2023). From flirting to f*cking: Examining the robustness of the precarious sexuality effect. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 52*(7), 3097–3112. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02651-1
Brekhus, W. (1996). Social marking and the mental coloring of identity: Sexual identity construction and maintenance in the United States. *Sociological Forum, 11*(3), 497–522.
Brekhus, W. (1998). A sociology of the unmarked: Redirecting our focus. *Sociological Theory, 16*, 34–51. https://www.jstor.org/stable/202213.
Brekhus, W. (2003). *Peacocks, chameleons, centaurs: Gay suburbia and the grammar of social identity*. University of Chicago Press.
Bullock, J. G., Green, D. P., & Ha, S. E. (2010). Yes, but what's the mechanism? (Don't expect an easy answer). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*(4), 550–558. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018933
Castro, A. (1971). In W. F. King, & S. Margaretten (Eds.), *The Spaniards: An introduction to their history* (1948th ed.). University of California Press. Trans.
Chaudoir, S., & Fisher, J. D. (2010). The disclosure processes model. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*(2), 236–256. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018193.The
Cheryan, S., & Markus, H. R. (2020). Masculine defaults: Identifying and mitigating hidden cultural biases. *Psychological Review, 127*(6), 1022–1052. https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000209
Chesir-Teran, D., & Hughes, D. (2009). Heterosexism in high school and victimization among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*(7), 963–975. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9364-x.
Cohn, S. (2000). *Race, gender, and discrimination at work*. Routledge.
Cooper, H., & Patall, E. A. (2009). The relative benefits of meta-analysis conducted with individual participant data versus aggregated data. *Psychological Methods, 14*(2), 165–176. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015565
Costafreda, S. G. (2009). Pooling fMRI data: Meta-analysis, mega-analysis and multi-center studies. *Frontiers in Neuroinformatics, 3*(33), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.3389/neuro.11.033.2009
Curran, P. J., & Hussong, A. M. (2009). Integrative data analysis: The simultaneous analysis of multiple data sets. *Psychological Methods, 14*(2), 81–100. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015914
Dean, J. J. (2014). *Straights: Heterosexuality in post-closeted culture*. New York University Press.
Detweiler, R. (1975). Shifting perspectives on the Salem witches. *The History Teacher, 8*(4), 596–610. https://doi.org/10.2307/492670.
Diefendorf, S., & Bridges, T. (2020). On the enduring relationship between masculinity and homophobia. *Sexualities, 23*(7), 1264–1284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460719876843
Epstein, D. (1997). Boyz' own stories: Masculinities and sexualities in schools. *Gender and Education, 9*(1), 105–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540259721484.
Eribon, D. (2004). In M. Lucey (Ed.), *Insult and the making of the gay self*. Duke University Press. Trans. (Original work published 1999).
Erikson, K. T. (1966). *Wayward puritans: A study in the sociology of deviance*. Wiley.
Espelage, D. L., Aragon, S. R., Birkett, M., & Koenig, B. W. (2008). Homophobic teasing, psychological outcomes, and sexual orientation among high school students: What influence do parents and schools have? *School Psychology Review, 37*(2), 202–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2008.12087894
Fein, S. (1996). Effects of suspicion on attributional thinking and the correspondence bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*(6), 1164–1184. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.6.1164
Fein, S., & Hilton, J. L. (1994). Judging others in the shadow of suspicion. *Motivation and Emotion, 18*(2), 167–198. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02249398
Fein, S., Hilton, J. L., & Miller, D. T. (1990). Suspicion of ulterior motivation and the correspondence bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*(5), 753–764. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.5.753
Felski, R. (2011). Suspicious minds. *Poetics Today, 32*(2), 215–234. https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-1261208
Flentje, A., Heck, N. C., Brennan, J. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2020). The relationship between minority stress and biological outcomes: A systematic review. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 43*(5), 673–694. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-019-00120-6
Follmer, K. B., & Jones, K. S. (2021). Navigating depression at work: Identity management strategies along the disclosure continuum. *Group and Organization Management*. https://doi.org/10.1177/10596011211002010. Advance online publication.
Freeman, J. B., Johnson, K. L., Ambady, N., & Rule, N. O. (2010). Sexual orientation perception involves gendered facial cues. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 36*(10), 1318–1331. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210378755
Frost, D. M., Lehavot, K., & Meyer, I. H. (2015). Minority stress and physical health among sexual minority individuals. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 38*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-013-9523-8
Gardner, L., & Rogolsky, S. (1950). Prejudice and identification of minority group membership. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 45*(1), 37–53.
Gilbert, D. T. (1998). Ordinary personology. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., pp. 89–150). McGraw Hill.
Goh, J. X., Kort, D. N., Thurston, A. M., Benson, L. R., & Kaiser, C. R. (2019). Does concealing a sexual minority identity prevent exposure to prejudice? *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 10*(8), 1056–1064. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550619829065
Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., & Westheimer, K. (2006). School support groups, other school factors, and the safety of sexual minority adolescents. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*(5), 573–589. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20173
Hastuti, R., & Timming, A. R. (2021). An inter-disciplinary review of the literature on mental illness disclosure in the workplace: Implications for human resource management. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2021.1875494. Advance online publication.
Howell, D. C. (2013). *Statistical methods for psychology* (8th ed.). Wadsworth.
IBM Corp. (2024). *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 30.0) [Computer software]*.
Jones, E. E., Davis, K. E., & Gergen, K. J. (1961). Role playing variations and their informational value for person perception. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 63*(2), 302–310. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0048514
John, L. K., Barasz, K., & Norton, M. I. (2016). Hiding personal information reveals the worst. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 113*(4), 954-959. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1516868113 (2016).
Jourard, S. M. (1971). *Self-disclosure: An experimental analysis of the transparent self*. John Wiley.
Kamen, H. (2014). *The Spanish inquisition: A historical revision* (4th ed.). Yale University Press.
Kelley, H. H. (1971). Attribution in social interaction. In E. E. Jones, D. E. Kanouse, H. H. Kelley, R. E. Nisbett, S. Valins, & B. Weiner (Eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behavior* (pp. 1–26). General Learning Press.
Le Forestier, Page-Gould, E., & Chasteen, A. L. (2022). Concealment stigma: The social costs of concealing. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 101*, 104340. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2022.104340.
Levant, R. F., Hall, R. J., & Rankin, T. J. (2013). Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form (MRNI-SF): Development, confirmatory factor analytic investigation of structure, and measurement invariance across gender. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 60*(2), 228–238. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031545
Lick, D. J., & Johnson, K. L. (2016). Straight until proven gay: A systematic bias toward straight categorizations in sexual orientation judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 110*(6), 801–817. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000052
lt, N. P., Lick, D. J., & Johnson, K. L. (2020). The straight categorization bias: A motivated and altruistic reasoning account. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 119*(6), 1266–1289. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000232.
Madon, S. (1997). What do people believe about gay males? A study of stereotype content and strength. *Sex Roles, 37*(9/10), 663–685. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02936334
McCormack, M. (2011). Hierarchy without hegemony: Locating boys in an inclusive school setting. *Sociological Perspectives, 54*(1), 83–102. https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2011.54.1.83
Mcpherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology, 27*, 415–444. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2678628.
Meyer, I. H. (1995). Minority stress and mental health in gay men. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 36*(1), 38–56.
Meyer, I. H., Russell, S. T., Hammack, P. L., Frost, D. M., & Wilson, B. D. M. (2021). Minority stress, distress, and suicide attempts in three cohorts of sexual minority adults: A U.S. probability samplz. *PLoS One, 16*(3 March), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0246827
Mittleman, J. (2023). Homophobic bullying as gender policing: Population-based evidence. *Gender & Society, 37*(1), 5–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432221138091
Montoya, A. K. (2024). Combining statistical and causal mediation analysis. In H. T. Reis, T. West, & C. M. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology* (pp. 622–652). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009170123.026.
Moore, K. E., & Tangney, J. P. (2017). Managing the concealable stigma of criminal justice system involvement: A longitudinal examination of anticipated stigma, social withdrawal, and post-release adjustment. *Journal of Social Issues, 73*(2), 322–340. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12219
Morgan, E. M., & Davis-Delano, L. R. (2016). Heterosexual marking and binary cultural conceptions of sexual orientation. *Journal of Bisexuality, 16*(2), 125–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2015.1113906
Nauright, J., & Chandler, T. J. L. (Eds.). (1996). *Making men: Rugby and masculine identity*. Routledge.
Netanyahu, B. (1999). *The marranos of Spain: From the late 14th to the early 16th century, according to contemporary Hebrew sources* (3rd ed.). Cornell University Press.
Netanyahu, B. (2001). *The origins of the inquisition in fifteenth century Spain* (2nd ed.). New York Review Books.
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. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.01.002
Oakes, H. (2020). *Closets breed suspicion: Environments that stigmatize concealable identities raise doubts about claims to contrasting non-stigmatized identities* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Waterloo]. UWSpace. http://hdl.handle.net/10012/15781.
O'Callaghan, J. K. (1975). *A history of medieval Spain*. Cornell University Press.

Olanubi, G. O.. *Perceiver's perspective of the discovery of concealment: Understanding the other side of disclosure* [Doctoral dissertation, UCLA]. eScholarship. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5p0308gg.

Pachankis, J. E. (2007). The psychological implications of concealing a stigma: A cognitive-affective-behavioral model. *Psychological Bulletin, 133*(2), 328–345. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.133.2.328

Pascoe, C. J. (2007). *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school*. University of California Press.

Perlson, J., Scholl, J., Mayer, K. H., O'Cleirigh, C., & Batchelder, A. W. (2021). To disclose, not disclose, or conceal: A qualitative study of HIV-positive men with multiple concealable stigmatized identities. *AIDS Patient Care and STDs, 35*(2), 47–55. https://doi.org/10.1089/apc.2020.0205

Preacher, K. J., Curran, P. J., & Bauer, D. J. (2006). Computational tools for probing interactions in multiple linear regression, multilevel modeling, and latent curve analysis. *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics, 31*(4), 437–448. https://doi.org/10.3102/10769986031004437

Quinn, D. M., & Earnshaw, V. A. (2011). Understanding concealable stigmatized identities: The role of identity in psychological, physical, and behavioral outcomes. *Social Issues and Policy Review, 5*(1), 160–190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2011.01029.x

Quinn, D. M., & Earnshaw, V. A. (2013). Concealable stigmatized identities and psychological well-being. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 7*(1), 40–51. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12005

Robins, R. S., & Post, J. M. (1997). *Political paranoia: The psychopolitics of hatred*. Yale University Press.

Rosenthal, R., & Rubin, D. B. (2003). $r_{equivalent}$: A simple effect size indicator. *Psychological Methods, 8*(4), 492–496. https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.8.4.492.

Rule, N. O., Ambady, N., Adams, R. B., & Macrae, C. N. (2008). Accuracy and awareness in the perception and categorization of male sexual orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(5), 1019–1028. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013194

Saewyc, E. M., Konishi, C., Rose, H. A., & Homma, Y. (2014). School-based strategies to reduce suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and discrimination among sexual minority and heterosexual adolescents in Western Canada. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies, 5*(1), 89–112.

Schmader, T., Bergsieker, H. B., & Hall, W. M. (2020). Cracking the culture code: A tri-level model for cultivating inclusion in organizations. In J. Forgas, K. Fieldler, & W. Crano (Eds.), *Applications of social psychology: How social psychology can contribute to the solution of real-world problems* (1st ed., pp. 334–355). Routledge.

Schrecker, E. (1998). *Many are the crimes: McCarthyism in America* (1st ed.). Princeton University Press.

Scodel, A., & Austrin, H. (1957). The perception of Jewish photographs by non-Jews and Jews. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 54*(2), 278–280. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0041105

Sedlovskaya, A., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Eibach, R. P., LaFrance, M., Romero-Canyas, R., & Camp, N. P. (2013). Internalizing the closet: Concealment heightens the cognitive distinction between public and private selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*(4), 695–715. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031179

Short, D. (2013). *"Don't be so gay!": Queers, bullying, and making schools safe*. University of British Columbia Press.

Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., & Simonsohn, U. (2013). Life after P-Hacking. *Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2205186, 17–19 January 2013.

Smith, R. M., Parrott, D. J., Swartout, K. M., & Tharp, A. T. (2015). Deconstructing hegemonic masculinity: The roles of antifemininity, subordination to women, and sexual dominance in men's perpetration of sexual aggression. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 16*(2), 160–169. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035956

Spencer, S. J., Zanna, M. P., & Fong, G. T. (2005). Establishing a causal chain: Why experiments are often more effective than mediational analyses in examining psychological processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*(6), 845–851. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.845

Stevens-Davidowitz, S. (2017). *Everybody lies: Big data, new data, and what the internet can tell us about what we really are*. Harper Collins.

Stevens-Davidowitz, S. (2017). *Everybody lies: Big data, new data, and what the Internet can tell us about what we really are*. Harper Collins.

Sung, Y. J., Schwander, K., Arnett, D. K., Kardia, S. L. R., Rankinen, T., Bouchard, C., Boerwinkle, E., Hunt, S. C., & Rao, D. C. (2014). An empirical comparison of meta-analysis and mega-analysis of individual participant data for identifying gene-environment interactions. *Genetic Epidemiology, 38*(4), 369–378. https://doi.org/10.1002/gepi.21800

Swann, W. B., & Read, S. J. (1981). Self-verification processes: How we sustain our self-conceptions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 17*(4), 351–372. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(81)90043-3

Taylor, C., Peter, T., McMinn, T. L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., … Schachter, K. (2011). *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust*.

Vandello, J. A., & Bosson, J. K. (2013). Hard won and easily lost: A review and synthesis of theory and research on precarious manhood. *Psyschology of Men & Masculinity, 14*(2), 101–113. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029826

Vandello, J. A., Kubicki, R. J., & Upton, R. A. (2024). Young men's sexual health through the lens of precarious manhood. *Health Education Journal, 83*(8), 944–955. https://doi.org/10.1177/00178969241254280

Vandello, J. A., Wilkerson, M., Bosson, J. K., Wiernik, B. M., & Kosakowska-Berezecka, N. (2023). Precarious manhood and men's physical health around the world. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities, 24*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000407

Vescio, T. K., Schermerhorn, N. E. C., Lewis, K. A., Yamaguchi-Pedroza, K., & Loviscky, A. J. (2025). Masculinity threats sequentially arouse public discomfort, anger, and positive attitudes toward sexual violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 51*(1), 96–109. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672231179431

West, K., Borras-Guevara, M. L., Morton, T., & Greenland, K. (2021). Fragile heterosexuality. *Social Psychology, 52*(3), 143–161. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000444

Wolf, K. B. (2009). Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A brief history of an idea. *Religion Compass, 3*, 72–85. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2008.00119.x

Wu, I. H. C., Bathje, G. J., Kalibatseva, Z., Sung, D. H., Leong, F. T. L., & Collins-Eaglin, J. (2017). Stigma, mental health, and counseling service use: A person-centered approach to mental health stigma profiles. *Psychological Services, 14*(4), 490–501. https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000165