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In the article *The Experience of Low-SES Students in Higher Education: Psychological Barriers to Success and Interventions to Reduce Social-Class Inequality*, the authors look at certain psychological barriers faced by low socioeconomic status, or SES, students and how colleges and universities continue to reproduce these barriers. The authors also describe three psychological interventions that have been used to decrease the achievement gap between high and low-SES students in higher education. Students from low-SES backgrounds may experience psychological barriers related to emotional experiences, identity management, self-perception, and motivation. For example, for the barriers identity management and self-perception, low-SES students may feel like they do not belong or have to deal with negative stereotypes that others hold about their competence or abilities in the university environment. According to the authors, university settings reproduce these psychological barriers and inequalities by utilizing practices that tend to advantage high-SES students while placing low-SES students at a disadvantage. One such way that universities continue to reproduce inequalities is by continuing to uphold certain attitudes or behaviors that more closely mirror those of high-SES students than low-SES students. The interventions of self-affirmation, difference-education, and goal reframing are recommended in order to close the achievement gap. In the practice of self-affirmation, students read a list of values and chose either the three most important values and explained why they were important or the three least important values and explained how these may be important for someone else. The intervention found that first-generation students who affirmed their values during this exercise earned higher grades at the end of semester as seen by the grades in that specific class and overall GPA. In the difference-education intervention, first-year students, including first and continuing-general students, participated in panels where upperclassman shared some of their college experiences. In the difference-education panel, students shared stories related to how their SES impacted their experiences while students in the control panel did not focus on their SES status. At the end of the year, it was found through a follow-up survey that low-SES students who attended the difference-education panel had higher grades, sought more resources, were more comfortable discussing their backgrounds, and were more prepared when it came to coping with stressful situations than students who attended the control panel. For goal reframing, the meaning of an exam was changed to either focus on the purpose of having a learning function or a selection function. When exams were used to improve knowledge, or with a learning function, low-SES students performed as well as high-SES students. However, when the exam was presented as a way to identify the differences in the abilities of students, or with a selection function, low-SES students performed worse than high-SES students.

Mickaël Jury has a PhD in social psychology from Université Clermont Auvergne in France. Jury’s research is in the area of achievement motivation with a focus on identifying the role that the social class of a students has on achievement goal endorsement. Annique Smeding also has a PhD in social psychology which she received from the University of Toulouse in France. She is now an Assistant Professor at the Savoie Mont Blanc University in France and her research covers various interests including social regulation of cognition and motivation, implicit social cognition, and self-presentation motives. Nicole M. Stephens has a PhD in social psychology from Stanford University and is an Associate Professor of Management and Organizations at Kellogg School of Management. Her research tends to focus on how factors such as social class, gender, and race work to shape people’s life experiences. Jessica E. Nelson, a graduate student at the Kellogg School of Management in the Management and Organizations department has an interest in how social class identities affect life experiences, as well as how biculturalism affects individuals. Cristina Aelenei is a third-year graduate student at Unversité Clermont Auvergne for social psychology and her research focuses on the gender paradox in education and on social reproduction in education, or how subtle cultural marks contribute to various disparities seen in school. Céline Darnon received her PhD from Grenoble in 2004 in experiment social psychology. She is an Assistant Professor at Université Clermont Auvergne and through her research, she explores how certain values within the educational system impact the motivations, goals, and achievement of students and how these values effect social reproduction of inequalities between low and high-SES students, as well as boys and girls. Cristina Aelenei is currently working under the supervision of Darnon while Jury received his PhD under the supervision of Darnon.

Of the three interventions proposed in this article, two have been implemented in high ranking universities, providing evidence to support these interventions. However, because the article has a focus on low-SES students, future research could focus on the use of these interventions in community colleges or lower ranked universities in order to see if these strategies are still effective in these settings. Research that focused on these settings would also be beneficial because these settings tend to enroll more low-SES students than higher ranked universities. The research contained in this article only focuses on four psychological barriers that low-SES students face in higher education, however, the experiences of these students are affected by other aspects as well. In addition, future research could also explore early experiences and racial or ethnic backgrounds of low-SES students as these factors can influence their experiences in higher education as well.