

ABSTRACT

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A BOURDIEUSIAN CRITICAL CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC, PRIVATE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES FOCUSED ON SERVING LOW SOCIOECONOMIC POPULATIONS (281 pp.)

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Social class stratification in higher education has increased; however, socioeconomic status (SES) continues to receive less targeted focus by higher education policy and practice than do race, ethnicity, and gender. Despite the challenges, low SES students are attending college but are not having equivalent experiences or outcomes to their higher SES peers. The rise in the numbers of low SES students on campuses has caused increased attention from federal lawmakers and higher education professionals, alike. New policies and practices are being proposed in order to better support this growing student group. One promising pedagogical practice for low SES college students is service-learning. This critical constructivist study draws upon Bourdieu to analyze the academic and social experiences of low SES students attending a selective, private university and enrolled in service-learning classes in which the population being served was also of low SES.

This study had three main findings. First, low SES students practice *passing behaviors* to cover their low SES. Second, participating in service-learning can reinforce the practice of passing or *chameleon* behaviors. Third, this may contribute to *questioning instructor* authority, both of which can negatively impact social and academic

experiences, thus inhibiting the acquisition of social and cultural capital. I advance recommendations for how campuses can create environments that embrace socioeconomic diversity and work toward creating opportunities for low SES students to develop the social and cultural capital they seek via private higher education.