

Advising Scholars with Blue Collars: Supporting Working-Class Students' Integration in Higher Education

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Overview of our presentation

- Introductions
- Definitions of working-class students
- Challenges faced by working-class students in four-year colleges and universities
- Research
- Findings
- Recommendations/ideas
- Discussion

Introductions

Krista Soria:

- Analyst, former adviser
- Intellection, Input, Learner, Achiever, Ideation

Mark Bultmann:

- Director, Campus Advising Initiatives, former adviser and adviser administrator
- Responsibility, Maximizer, Arranger, Learner, Context

Let's meet each other!

- How would you describe your social class growing up?
- What are some cultural artifacts that informed you of your social class?
- What are some things about your social class culture that you brought with you to higher education?
- How did your social class upbringing influence your experience in higher education?

Who are working-class students?

Social class is typically defined by a combination of elements:

- parental education
- family income or wealth
- parental occupation (emphasis on power relations)
- cultural considerations
- self-identification

Who are working-class students?

- Come from families with lower incomes
- First-generation
- Students of color
- Female
- Lower ACT/SAT
- Lower GPA
- More likely to attend 2-year colleges

Working-class students & college access

- Among HS grads in 2004, 43% of students with family incomes under \$30,000 attended college
- 75% of students with family incomes over \$50,000 enrolled in college (Long, 2008)

Working-class students & college access

- Working-class students are less likely to choose prestigious colleges
- Among the 146 top colleges/universities, 74% came from highest SES quartile while 3% came from lowest SES quartile
In tier two schools, 39 point gap
(Carnevale & Rose, 2004)

Working-class students & college access

- Why less participation in higher education?
- Why less participation in prestigious and 4-year colleges?

Working-class students & engagement

- Middle/upper-class students' cultural orientations to college are well-honed
- Stuber (2011) discovered that middle/upper-class students arrived at campus already involved in clubs/orgs
- Working-class students work more hours per week

Working-class students & engagement

- Working-class students may face alienation, estrangement, and imposter phenomenon in higher education (Beeghley, 2005; Goldthorpe, Llewellyn, & Payne, 1987; Ostrove, 2003)
- Lower sense of belonging on campus (Ostrove, 2003)

Working-class students & class awareness

- Working-class students have higher class awareness, class consciousness, and implications (Stuber, 2006)
- “Class background structures a sense of who belongs and who does not” (Ostrove & Long, 2007, p. 380)

Working-class students & college success

- By age 24, only 12% of students from low-income families earned a BA compared with 73% of students from high-income families (Mortenson, 2007)
- 36% of low-income students completed a BA in 8 years compared with 81% of high-income students (Adelman, 2006)

Working-class students & college success

- Why do working-class and low-income students have lower persistence and graduation rates?

Present study

- Compared with middle/upper-class students, do working-class students experience lower social integration? Do differences observed hold when controlling for additional academic, demographic, and college experience variables?
- Social integration = sense of belonging, campus climate for social class, social involvement

Methods

- Used a multi-institutional survey (SERU) distributed in spring 2011
- 213,160 UG students across 8 large, public research universities
- Non-transfer, non-international students
- Subsample of 20% of students randomly assigned to complete a survey module ($n = 14,150$).

Methods

	Middle/Upper-Class		Low-Income/Working-Class	
	N	%	N	%
First Generation	1393	13.4	1662	57.1
Female	5911	58.2	1833	61.6
Asian	1813	17.8	718	24.1
African American	395	3.9	358	12
Hispanic	879	8.7	673	22.6
Native American	35	.3	10	.3
Other	150	1.5	27	.9
Unknown	310	3.1	89	3
White	6575	64.7	1101	37

Methods

	Middle/Upper-Class			Low-Income/Working-Class		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N
Age	20.15	1.48	10157	20.40	2.38	2976
ACT	28.89	3.48	3516	26.43	4.22	832
SAT	1878.77	255.56	8732	1758.44	254.57	2616
GPA	3.33	.52	10552	3.12	.58	3094

Procedures

- *t*-tests
 - Between low-income/working-class students and middle/upper-class students
 - Campus climate for social class, sense of belonging, involvement
- Ordinary least squares regression
 - Predicting campus climate for social class, sense of belonging, and involvement

Measures

- Social class
 - “which of the following describes your social class when you were growing up?”
 - 5% low-income or poor
 - 17.7% working-class
 - 42.4% middle-class
 - 32.2% upper-middle or professional-middle
 - 2.7% wealthy

Measures

- Involvement ($\alpha = .60$)
 - Hours spent per week socializing with friends, participation in rec sports, or creative interests
- Campus climate for social class ($\alpha = .60$)
 - Whether students were respected on campus regardless of their social class; the frequency with which they heard students express negative or stereotypical views of social classes

Measures

- Sense of belonging ($\alpha = .85$)
 - Satisfaction with academic/social aspects of campus; feel like they belong on campus; feel like they would return knowing what they know now
- Residence
 - Working-class students less likely to live in a fraternity/sorority and more likely to live with family
- Employment on or off campus
- Academics (gpa)
- Number of credits earned

Measures

- General campus climate ($\alpha = .77$)
 - Campus climate is “friendly to hostile,” “caring to impersonal,” etc.
- Pride and Respect ($\alpha = .78$)
 - I am proud to be a student at this campus; this institution values students’ opinions; diversity is important on this campus, etc.
- Faculty Interactions ($\alpha = .79$)
 - Had a class in which the professor knew or learned your name; interacted with faculty during lecture class sessions, etc.
- Campus Participation ($\alpha = .65$)
 - Performing service; participating in student clubs, etc.

Limitations

- Single institutional type: limits to generalizability
- Response and non-response bias
- Limitations in social class measurement

Results

- Working-class students reported
 - Lower sense of belonging
 - Less involvement
 - Less welcoming campus climate for social class
 - Statistically significant ($p < .05$); small effect sizes

Results

- Controlling for other demographic and academic/social experiences, working-class students reported
 - Lower sense of belonging
 - Less involvement
 - Less welcoming campus climate for social class

Additional relationships observed

	Sense of belonging	Campus climate	Social involvement
First-generation	-	-	-
Female	-		-
African American	-		-
American Indian	-	-	
Asian	-		-
Hispanic		-	-
Other/Unknown	-		-

Additional relationships observed

	Sense of belonging	Campus climate	Social involvement
Lived with Family	-	+	-
Lived on campus	+	+	-
Lived in fraternity or sorority	+	-	+
Employed off campus			
Employed on campus		-	-
GPA	+	+	-
Credits	+		+

Additional relationships observed

	Sense of belonging	Campus climate	Social involvement
General campus climate	+	+	+
Pride and respect	+	+	+
Faculty interactions	+	-	+
Campus participation	+	-	+

Recommendations

- Consider institutional programs like bridge programs, welcome week or expanded orientation to help students become more familiar or comfortable with campus culture.
- Start with concrete steps that help students see the big picture. Create four-year, or degree plans to map them their way through their degree.

Recommendations

- Offer extra services or assistance to help students understand or plan for paying their way through college. Help them weigh the costs and advantages of working extra hours to pay for college vs. shorter time to degree.
- Steer students toward campus employment, perhaps research or lab positions that help them begin to actively connect complex “thinking” and hands-on “doing.”

Recommendations

- Plant the seeds for bigger things – recommend graduate and professional school for those who could be good candidates. Consider the McNair Scholars or local programs that support preparation for graduate education.
- Encourage students to take risks. Explore new ideas and new territory with them, or support them in trying something they have dreamed about doing.

Recommendations

- As an adviser consider encouraging students to participate in mentor programs if your institution has them, or investigate options through professional associations if they are available.
- Share information with students about programs and activities that might appeal to their work ethic and sense of accomplishing something as opposed to more esoteric or theoretical. Service projects or service learning could be options.

Recommendations

- Additional thoughts or recommendations from your experience?

Contact Information

- Thank you!
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