

# Keeping It Classy!

## Discussing Class & Socioeconomic Status

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### The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

#### Overview:

This training will discuss class and socioeconomic status, as well as look at how they intersect with each other. While taking part in this training, participants will learn the common definitions or conceptualizations of these terms. They will also explore stereotypes associated with social class. Finally, they will analyze how those factors effect individuals in their everyday life. In addition, these issues are salient for Bonner Scholars and Leaders and often come up in the context of their ongoing civic and community engagement work in communities. This training builds students' knowledge and skills around issues of diversity and promotes critical thinking and empathy.

#### Category:

Diversity, Team Building, Critical Thinking, Community Building

#### Level:

Moderate. The primary audience for this training is sophomore, however, this training is a good introductory training to discuss class, socioeconomic status, and topics that influence and depend on the topics.


#### Recommended

#### Bonner Sequence:

This is designed for second year Bonner students, as part of the Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 model, Stage 2: Understanding.



**Second  
Year  
Students**

Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 Student Developmental Model			
Stage 1: Exposure	Stage 2: Understanding	Stage 3: Application and Discussion	Stage 4: Adaptation
			

### Focus or Goals of this Guide:

The goal of this training is to provide a comfortable space to talk about class and the components that establish that status. In doing such, participants should also be doing the following:

- Participants will develop a definition for class, socioeconomic status, and the three forms of capital (i.e. Cultural Capital, Social Capital, and Economic Capital).
- Participants will explore how the definitions above are all connected and influence everyday life.
- Participants will reflect and discuss how class has influenced their own lives and influenced the lives of others.

### Materials:

- Large flip chart or Post It paper
- Pens or pencils (Any material participants can use to draw and fill in the handouts)
- Exploring Stereotypes handout (enclosed)
- Classy! Card (enclosed)
- Exploring Class Perceptions Handout (enclosed)

### How To Prepare

To prepare, familiarize yourself with the contents within the trainer guide. After that, go through the bulleted list below to complete all of the tasks that need to be done prior to the groups arrival.

- Write Group Expectations on paper, white board, or Post It for entire group to see.
- Become familiar with the handouts and print adequate amounts of all of them.
- Gather materials needed. (i.e. writing utensils to fill in the handouts.)

## Brief Outline:

This outline will explore the complexness of class and socioeconomic status (SES). Through, we will explore the effect that those two labels have on ones identity and they identity they project on to others. To conclude, the group will draw its focus to class difference and will explore ways that those differences manifest themselves. This training is designed to run for 60 minutes.

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|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Exploring Stereotypes                 | suggested time 10 Minutes |
| 2) Definitions & Examples                | suggested time 15 Minutes |
| 3) Navigating Class & Exploring Self     | suggested time 15 Minutes |
| 4) Drawing Attention To Class Difference | suggested time 10 Minutes |
| 5) Closing: Connecting & Reflecting      | suggested time 10 Minutes |

Refrain from making someone a spokesperson for a certain group	Refrain from using one experience to explain a large group	Reform from judgement but be aware of personal biases
Do not expect everyone to know your "Story"	Do not assume that you know anyone's story	Step Up. Step Back.
Remember, you are your best advocate.	Be willing to listen to difference.	Express needs for clarification.
Be respectful.	Encourage curiosity	Use I statements & refrain from "generals"

## Your Plan

### Part 1) Exploring Stereotypes

Suggested time: 10 Minutes

*This activity will have participants exploring stereotypes that they are aware of and are influenced by class and socioeconomic status. While doing such, they will be asked to fill in each of the pre-drawn people with those stereotypes.*

To start, read through the group expectations listed below. You should have these posted prior to groups arrival. Have the group popcorn read the statements aloud. Allow briefly for participants to ask questions if they have any. Afterwards, move into the opening activity, **"Exploring Stereotypes."**

For the first activity, hand out the **"Exploring Stereotypes"** handout as well as some sort of writing/drawing utensil. Inform the group that each of the 4 outlines represents one of the 4 social classes (i.e. working, poor/low income, middle, upper). Inform students that this exercise will explore stereotypes. This exercise will have participants depict stereotypes that are typically described in society.

For instruction, ask participants to look at each class and illustrate that class the best way they can. Some may show difficulty with this due to a lack of understanding or lack of comfort. Regardless, ask them to push through these difficulties and do the best they can. This portion should take 10 minutes, allowing for 5 minutes of reflection afterwards.

Following this activity, the facilitator will ask the group reflection questions. These questions will allow for the group to share the stereotypes that they drew on the people. Question suggestions include, but are not limited to:

- "What stereotypes did you express within your drawings?"
- "Was it difficult to think of or draw stereotypes?"
- "Do you feel any of these stereotypes are accurate?" and "If yes/no, why?"
- "Do you see yourself in any of these depictions?" "Is it an accurate depiction?"

## **Part 2) Definitions & Examples**

Suggested time: 15 Minutes

*During this part of the training, participants and the facilitator will develop definitions and discuss examples of class, socioeconomic status, and the various forms of capital (i.e. social, cultural, etc.).*

To begin the conversations, there are some important concepts and facts for the group to discuss. Inform the group that this training will mainly be discussing **socioeconomic status (SES)**, **Class**, and **forms of Capital**. You will also be discussing some things that are similar and different across those different categories. Before doing that, you will need to distribute the **Classy! Card**

Inform the group that this card will be used throughout the remainder of the training. On the board are subjects and topics that are different depending on which class or

socioeconomic status you belong to. If they do not know what that means, tell them that those concepts will be explained in the coming activity.

*Read the script below to give an overview of the activity.*

*“The purpose of this card is to take note of when a topic on the card is discussed or addressed. Indicate, in some way, each time a conversation about a topic on the card occurs. You can use check marks or tally marks beside the word or in the box that surrounds the word. You can also put a mark every time one of the topics is dependent on another topic being discussed. For example, if a conversation is occurring about having a job, you can make a note beside health care due to the fact that most people rely on their employers for health insurance. Another example could be that you put a mark by faith if you over hear a conversation that emphasizes the importance of faith, regardless of being rich or poor.”*

### **The group will now start to define and understand those concepts.**

To start this process, put everyone into small groups, consisting of 5 to 6 people. You will also need to have the terms socioeconomic status, class, capital, and the three types of capital (social, economic, and cultural) written on a flip chart and easily accessible. You will be writing the definitions of each word on the paper as you introduce it to the group.

### **Read the script below to get started.**


*“The American Psychologist Association stated in 2007 that Socioeconomic factors are vital determinants of human behavior and functioning across the lifespan<sup>1</sup>. With that being said, what is socioeconomic status?”*

**Following that script, open it up to the large group, accepting one to two guesses. After hearing some guesses, read the following script below.**

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/Measuring\\_SES-Paper\\_authorship\\_corrected.pdf](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/Measuring_SES-Paper_authorship_corrected.pdf)

*"The United States government, according to Bureau of Justice Statistic, says that socioeconomic status is determined based off income, education, and occupation<sup>2</sup>.*

 *Simply put, your socioeconomic status is a governmental categorization that helps discuss your work experience and financial security. It is influenced by your education, income, and job. It is also important we know the definition of class. What is class and what does it have to do with socioeconomic status? Discuss this with your small group and be prepared to share. I am going to call on one or two groups to give us a guess at the answer."*

After reading the script, write the definition for socioeconomic status on the flip chart. The easiest definition to use is "**socioeconomic status is a governmental categorization that helps discuss your work experience and financial security. It is influenced by by your education, income, and job.**"

Give the groups time to discuss, roughly 3 to 5 minutes, and then ask one to groups to share (depending on time). Call on a few groups and have them share their definition for class. After hearing their responses, read the script below.

 *"One resource we will be looking at later in this training is a book called Class Matters. According to that book, class is a group of people who generally share political attitudes, lifestyles, consumption habits, cultural interest, and share ways of surviving and/or getting ahead. (Class Matters, Intro)."*

Continue by reading the script below. "Capital is a huge factor in class and socioeconomic status. By definition, capital is wealth in the form of money or other assets owned by a person or organization. However, Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist and anthropologist, took the idea of class a step further and said that class was influenced by capital. Bourdieu believed that there were three types of capital; social, economic, and cultural capital. In your small groups, talk about what you think each type of capital means and try to come up with an example for each form of capital. I'm going to call on random groups to try to give me an example of each type of capital."

Give the group 3 to 5 minutes to discuss the prompt and attempt to conceptualize an example for each form of capital. After giving the group some time, retain everyone's

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/Measuring\\_SES-Paper\\_authorship\\_corrected.pdf](https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/Measuring_SES-Paper_authorship_corrected.pdf)

attention and ask for a group to share an example for each one. After hearing the guesses and examples, write the definitions on the flip chart. Read the definitions below for each one.

- **Social Capital**- networks of influence or support based on group membership (such as family), friends, or other contacts.
- **Cultural Capital**- forms of knowledge, educational credentials, and skills.
- **Economic Capital**- money, property, and other assets.

After you have established these definitions and have given them the handout, write the three questions listed below, on a piece of flip chart paper. You will need to write these three questions as well ask them aloud to the large group.

- What percent of Americans make over 389,00 dollars annually?
- How many Americans are living in poverty?
- Have we seen any increase in the median household income?

After writing these three questions on the board, have them discuss in their small groups what they think these numbers mean. Give the groups the usual 3 to 5 minutes to discuss. Follow that by calling on 3 groups, hearing an answer for each one. After everyone has discussed in their groups and you have heard a few guesses, read the script below to inform them of what these number mean.

“These questions can be answered by three numbers. These numbers are very important when discussing class in America. When looking at the first question, only 1% of Americans make at least 389,436 dollars annually. On the flip side, the answer to the second question is 43 million. That is the number of American living in poverty as of 2015. The last answer is an exciting answer. For the first time in roughly 8 years, we experienced a 5.2% increase in median household income in 2015. This is the first time we have seen an increase since 2007<sup>3</sup> .”

Allow a minute for those numbers to sink in. Some may react to the large number of Americans in poverty, others may be angered or confused that people can make as much money as the top 1%. Either way, be prepared for a wide array of reactions. Instruct them to keep those thoughts as you transition to the next activity.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0912/which-income-class-are-you.aspx>

### Part 3) Navigating Class & Exploring Self

Suggested time: 15 Minutes

During this portion of the training, you will be exploring and expressing your own identity, based upon on class and SES. You will do thins by reflecting on how you perceive yourself as well as how others or society may perceive you. This activity will be similar to the opening activity.

***Deepening on the size of the group, you can either stay in small groups or reassemble back into one large group. If you have more than 20 people, it is recommended that you stay in small groups.***

You will distribute the *Exploring Class Perceptions*. On this hand out, you will see two outlines of a person. On the left side, have them draw the perceived socioeconomic status and/or class that they fall into. Have them illustrate how others in society have perceived them and what causes them to perceive them that way. On the right side, have them draw how they see themselves in either their social class, socioeconomic status, or both. They can include depictions of types of capital if they feel it better helps represent who they are. They can also use words to describe certain aspects of both identities if they feel they cannot accurately draw some of the things they feel.

Give them roughly 10 minutes for this activity then have them discuss in their small group. In their small groups, ask them to share one more feature about themselves from both the perceived and reality side. Ask them to share one thing that is different from each side as well as one thing that my be the same. These discussion should take any where from 5 to 8 minutes, with everyone in the small group sharing a piece of information.

### Part 4) Drawing Attention To Class Differences

Suggested Time: 10 Minutes

During this portion of the training, you will be reflecting on the handout, ***Classy! Card***. You will use this card to start conversation on how much of an influence class has on everyday things such as health care, jobs, and faith. You want the group to think about how class is deeply influential in our lives.



This activity will draw attention back on the Classy Card you handed out at the beginning of activity 2. Participants will now look at the card as well as look at their results. The participants should reflect on the card topics again, as well as looking at which ones came up in topics or could have been related to the topics discussed. Have them consider which ones they thought were dependent of class but may not have been discussed today.

Still in their small group, have them discuss their boards. Prompt the groups discussions by reading the questions below, one at a time.

- What was the most obvious thing that would be based off of class and/or socioeconomic status?
- What was the most shocking or upsetting topic that changed due to class or SES?
- Thinking about your perceived self and the real you, which one of the topics do you see heavily influenced by your class or SES?
- Do you feel like any of these topics should not be dependent on class or SES? Why?

After asking those 4 questions, have each group share-out one or two things that the group talked about. This should serve as a way to let people hear from different people without making things awkward or require too much vulnerability.

## **Part 5) Reflecting & Connecting**

Suggested Time: 10 Minutes

The purpose of this portion of the training is to do bring closure to the conversations and activities that the group has participated in. In this section, you want to begin to wrap up conversations and answer any last minute questions. This will serve as a closing for this training.

The group will be looking at reflection questions while being in a space that, if needed, lets participants wrestle with last minute thoughts, feelings, or emotions. Participants will be able to express themselves and begin to discuss ways they can move forward afterwards.

**Some suggested reflection questions are listed below. Use these or others to prompt deeper reflection.**

- What is something that you have learned about yourself through this training?
- What are some things you learned about another community, preferably one you do not belong to?
- How can you use this information to move forward?
- How can your Bonner cohort (class or entire program) use this information in moving forward?

**Credits:**

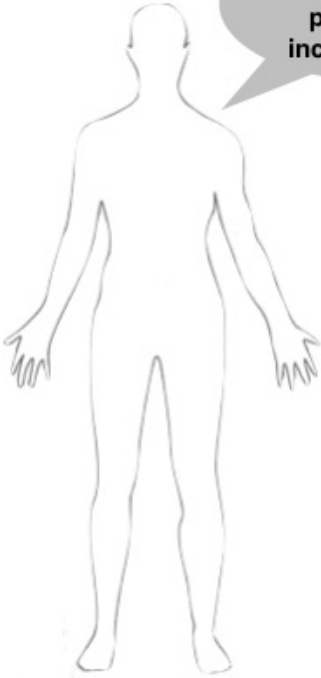
This training was developed in 2017 by Hunter Malone, a Bonner Scholar at Berea College. This training utilized information from a variety of sources listed below.

- *Class Matters*, by Bill Keller and *Class Matters Trainer Guide*, developed by Eliza Blades for the Bonner Foundation
- United States Bureau of Justice Statistics

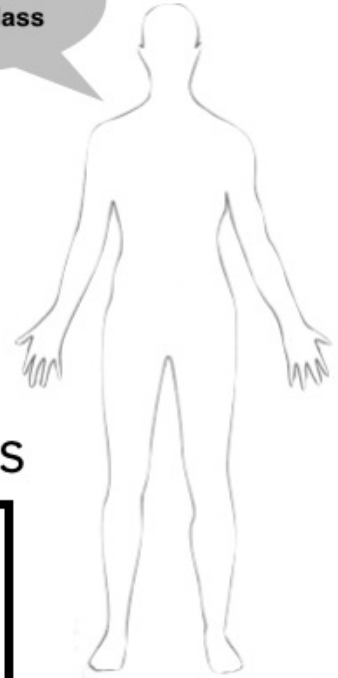
**Handouts:**

**Exploring Stereotypes, Bingo Board: Classy!, and Activity #3 Handout: Exploring Class Perceptions**

Hi! I am a member of the **poor / low income class**



Hi! I am a member of the **working class**



## Exploring Stereotypes

Fill in the 4 outlines with stereotypes appropriate to the class labeled for each. You will be discussing your results in small groups afterwards.

**Disclaimer: The stereotypes being depicted to do not have be ones that you believe in. They can be ones that you have heard or have witnessed.**

Hi! I am a member of the **middle class**



Hi! I am a member of the **upper class**



# Classy! Card

Throughout parts of this training pay attention areas where class is heavily influential. Use this card to make note of when a topic on the the board below is discussed. You can do this by using check marks or tally!

Career Readiness	Health Access	Class Mobility	High School Education	Residency	Primary Education	Thoughts about government and governmental policies
Legal Protection	Tax Services	College Education	Insert Your Own Idea Here	Political Involvement	Legal Aid	Patriotism or National Pride
Family Support	Vacation	Owning Property	Faith	Community Service or Community Engagement	Food Access	Access to mental health services
Access to child care	Criminal Record	Access to Transportation	Accurate Media Depiction	Post College Studies	Access to Sexual Education	Holidays and Family Celebration

# Exploring Class Perceptions

During this activity you will be exploring perceptions and reality.

On the left side, insert pictures, words, and illustrations that depict a time you were perceived or expected to be a member of a certain class or socioeconomic status. On the right, insert pictures, words, or drawings that illustrate how you see yourself in your socioeconomic status or how you perceive you class status.

**Perceived**

**Reality**

