



Social Class Identities

Most Common Attitudes among College Students

From **DeMethra LaSha Bradley**

1 Embarrassed

Feels guilt or shame regarding class identity. Strives to blend in with the majority. May go to great lengths to hide class background:

- omits details about geographic origin or parents' jobs
- avoids specifying things like school, neighborhood, or recreational activities
- doesn't allow visits from family/friends to college (or invite college friends home)

2 Comfortable

Secure and confident in their social class narratives. Makes no apologies for what was or wasn't available to them on the basis of their class standing. Shares personal stories frequently and with pleasure. Understands class background as an important part of who they are. May feel this sense of comfort due to lack of knowledge regarding social class issues, or not.

This resource draws on a typology created and explicated by Dr. DeMethra LaSha Bradley in How to Talk about Hot Topics on Campus: From Polarization to Moral Conversation (2008).

Infographic created by Dr. Sarah Ropp, 2021.

3 Straddler

Torn between two or more social classes. A sense of alienation. Frequent feelings of guilt (for having "abandoned" their previous social class), awkwardness and embarrassment (as they navigate new circles), or need to prove that they "belong."

- Some find themselves, at college, in a different social class circle from the one in which they were raised (e.g. from a working class, rural environment to a more middle-class one)
- Some are born into one social class but feel more comfortable in another

4 Multiclasslingual

Functions well and feels comfortable in more than one social class setting. May come from mixed-class families, and/or have had experiences in which they learned to navigate new milieus (work, study abroad, magnet schools, etc). Able to adapt & pick up social class cues very quickly, and proud of this ability.

5 Escape artist

Reinvents themselves and takes on a new class identity. Unlike embarrassed student, does not hide their background or feel guilt over abandoning it. Asserts a more natural sense of connection and belonging in their new social class identity.