

SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

Universities bring people together from a range of socio-economic backgrounds in a way which many schools do not. You will therefore encounter people from across the class spectrum; both those who are more privileged than you, and those who are less so. It is important to be mindful of class difference and respectful of those from different socio-economic backgrounds. At Cambridge, we broadly categorise those who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds as *Class Act*. This term includes those who are:

- working class
- first generation
- state comprehensive educated
- estranged
- care-experienced
- low-income

Why is this important?

- It is an unavoidable fact of life that class difference is ingrained in British society, extending far beyond the financial sphere; it is important to be actively aware of this so that you are able to conduct yourself in a way which is respectful and inclusive
- Cambridge was recently named the worst UK university for social inclusion - evidently, there is still work to be done on class awareness.

How does class impact higher education?

- Income disparity means that access to good education is incredibly variable in the UK. This creates barriers for 'unprivileged' students both during the admissions process AND the degree. More privileged students (generally - but not always - those who went to independent schools, or state schools in affluent areas) often receive better preparation for university. Remember, educational privilege goes beyond the classroom - it is usually exacerbated by additional opportunities such as internships, clubs etc. These disparities are exaggerated at Cambridge, where independently educated students make up a larger proportion of students than in the population at large (2020 - 70% state educated at Cambridge/93% nationally, and these figures understate the discrepancy as they only take sixth form provision into account and aggregate grammars, FE colleges and comps); consequently, assumptions about a student's prior education are often based on a 'privileged' norm.

- Students from working class/low income backgrounds are more likely to have less contact/experience with higher education, especially outside of the school system
 - For instance, first generation students can't depend on their parents to prepare them for university (academically, socially, mentally). It's also possible that a working class/low income student faces barriers to accessing higher education in their home lives - e.g. pressure to work a 'real job' from family, limited sympathy for uni workload, etc.
- Consider the experience of estranged and care experienced students - lack of a stable home life often has a detrimental impact on ability to study
- Combined together, such factors may result in social/academic alienation - a traumatic and demoralising experience
- These examples are by no means exhaustive - every student is unique

REFLECTION POINT

How can we be mindful of class difference and create an inclusive environment?

RESOURCES

- **Resources in college**
 - Porter's Lodge (01223 334900)
 - College Nurse
 - Tutor/Senior Tutor
 - Male/Female Welfare Officers
 - BAME Officer
 - LGBT+ Officer
- **Resources in the university**
 - [Student Unions' Advice Service \(SUAS\)](#)
 - Nightline - open between 7am and 7am, 01222374444
 - [University Counselling Service \(UCS\)](#)
 - Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor (SAHA), Amy O'Leary (more info on handout)
 - Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA)
 - [CUSU BME Campaign](#)
 - [FLY Cambridge](#)
 - [FUSE Cambridge](#)
 - [Cambridge ACS](#)
 - [third space](#)
 - [King's Traces of Empire](#)
- **In Cambridge**
 - Your GP (incoming Fresher's need to register)
 - Addenbrooke's A&E
 - Lime Tree Clinic
 - Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre (women only)
 - Broken Rainbow (LGBT+ only)
 - Samaritans

BBC iplayer:

- Windrush Scandal
 - Sitting in Limbo 2020: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08g29ff/sitting-in-limbo>
- Murder of Anthony Walker
 - Anthony 2020: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000lb9c/anthony>

Books:

- **White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism** by Robin DiAngelo
- **Taking up Space** by Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi
- **Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race** - by Reni Eddo-Lodge 2018
- **Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire** - by Akala 2019
- **How to Be an Antiracist** - by Ibram X. Kendi 2019
- **Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India** by Shashi Tharoor 2017
- **The Cross and The Lynching Tree** - by James H Cone 2013