



Belonging Community Conversation on Class

Part of the Social Status Series

Host Guide

Imagine Fox Cities Initiative



Dear Change Maker,

Thank you for considering hosting one of the Belonging Community Conversations on Social Status. First things first, please read the short set of materials provided carefully before beginning your conversation. The goals of these conversations are to listen and share personal stories without judgement in order to create a foundation upon which to take action together to enhance the wellbeing of all members of our community.

The expressed American ideal is the creation of a society that is fair and has opportunity for all, regardless of individual or group identity. We see examples everyday of how we fall short of this ideal. We hope these conversations will help us understand more about what social status means and how we can use our power and individual agency to create a more inclusive community in which everyone is valued. By enhancing our understanding of the issues related to social status, we can plan a better way forward together that will improve the wellbeing of all of us in the Fox Cities, and create a community in which we all know that we belong.

Thank you for taking this important step toward changing our community for the better. We hope that you will host or participate in all four of the conversations related to social status addressing the topics of class, privilege, allyship and bridging. In order to ensure that we keep improving this work and that your efforts have the biggest impact, please complete the short five-item survey after your conversation by following the link at the end of the facilitators/host guide.

With gratitude,

Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Group



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Facilitator's Instructions

This Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Conversation offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet by video call or in person for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others. Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn. No preparation is required, though background links are available for participants to gain more information on the topic. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate. Some hosts may offer a Q & A after Closing. This uses the Living Room Conversations format.

Introductions:

Why We're Here (~10 min)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

Conversation Agreements:

How We'll Engage (~5 min)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud. (A more detailed explanation of each is attached.)

Be curious and listen to understand.

Show respect and suspend judgment.

Note any common ground as well as any differences.

Be authentic and welcome that from others.

Be purposeful and to the point.

Own and guide the conversation.



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Question Rounds:

What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round 1:

Getting to Know Each Other (~15 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer the following questions:

- a. What is one thing you would like to learn in this conversation?
- b. How do you want to be remembered?

Round 2:

Round Two: Class (~40 min)

To be read by the host

Class is an individual's (or group's) position within the social hierarchy, typically based on power, prestige and wealth.

Two terms to consider related to class are caste, the system of dividing society into hereditary classes and meritocracy, a social system in which advancement is based on individual ability or achievement. These represent the extremes in how social class can be determined; one, the caste system, occurs in a number of cultures; the other, meritocracy is thought by many to be a myth. Both are contested ideas as it relates to how social status is determined in the United States.



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(Continued from the previous page)

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- a. What does the concept of class mean to you? Is it different from the definition we are using today in our discussion? Do you see class differences in your neighborhood?
- b. Have you ever lived, worked or gone to school in a place that was considered a different class (for example wealthier or poorer) than you are now? What were the interactions with people from a different class like?
- c. What social class distinctions have you witnessed other than those related to income?
- d. Have you personally observed an opportunity gap in your community? What opportunities have or have not been available to you?
- e. What does “social equity” mean to you? Is social equity a concern for you?



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Round 3:

Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Answer the following question:

In one sentence, share what was most meaningful or valuable to you in the experience of this conversation?

*Take 2 minutes to answer **one** of the following questions:*

- a. What new understanding or common ground did you find within this topic?
- b. Has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- c. What question do you wish was asked that was not included in the conversation?
- d. Name one important thing that was accomplished here.
- e. Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min) Provide feedback!

<https://tinyurl.com/socialstatusseriesfeedback>



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Conversation Agreements

Be curious and listen to understand.

Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.

Show respect and suspend judgment.

People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try truly listening, without interruption or crosstalk.

Note any common ground as well as any differences.

Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.

Be authentic and welcome that from others.

Share what is important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.

Be purposeful and to the point.

Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.

Own and guide the conversation.

Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.



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Understanding Class

Additional resources about Class

What is Social Class

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-social-class-and-why-does-it-matter-3026375>

America's Caste System

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/04/898574852/its-more-than-racism-isabel-wilkerson-explains-america-s-caste-system>

Atlantic article from author of The Meritocracy Trap:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/09/meritocracy-s-miserable-winners/594760/>

Socio Economic Equality

<https://teejaytrue.com/socio-economic-equality/>