

## Examples of social class discrimination on a university campus

Bourdieu (bore-dew) defined “symbolic violence” as a form of violence that operates to maintain social hierarchy dominance. Symbolic violence reflects the harm that the poor/working class experience as they receive socio-cultural messages that legitimize the power and superiority of privileged classes and conversely, the inadequacy and deviance of classes whose lifestyles are different.

Here, symbolic domination “results when we mis-recognize as natural those systems of classification that are actually culturally arbitrary and historical.”

The operations of symbolic violence are such that members of privileged classes need not exert conscious effort to maintain the subordination of less powerful classes – they merely need to continue to maintain the lifestyles, exclusivity, and habits of privilege.

Throughout his work, Bourdieu specifically discussed the impact of symbolic violence on education and the related ramifications for disadvantaged individuals.

**Micro-aggressions.** Negative attitudes towards poor/working-class can be detected within daily experiences, language, and systems. Micro-aggressions is defined as commonplace derogatory messages received by people in specific minority groups.

They occur within three dimensions:

- **micro-assaults** (deliberately wounding messages);
- **micro-insults** (implicitly painful messages); and
- **micro-invalidations** (messages that ignore a person’s feelings, lifestyle, and reality).

The expression of such biases can evoke feelings of pain and psychological distress for many people who feel the brunt of jokes, environmental messages, direct and indirect words, and general feelings that imply that they do not belong.

Micro-aggressions are most frequently discussed with regard to the intersectionality of class with race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

### 3 levels of micro-aggressions in relation to social class groupings

- **First**, the widespread use of the term ‘white trash’ is an example of a classist micro-aggression that is used in everyday dialogue, and in the media.
- **Next**, the example of a student giving a poor friend tips on suitable manners and clothing (i.e., according to middle-class norms) as a micro-insult.
- **Finally**, micro-invalidations include the media’s focus on middle-and upper-class lifestyles.

Although individual incidences such as these may seem minor, collectively these messages can elicit feelings of worthlessness, pain, and alienation for poor/working-class people.

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The Poor/Working-Class College Students’ Challenges and Resiliency Factors Scale by Rebecca Reed, 2017  
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-poor-and-working-class-college-students-Challenges-and-Resiliency-Factors-Scale.pdf>