

Breaking Barriers: The Power of Diversity Tactics in Dismantling Classism from a Religious Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of diversity tactics in dismantling classism, emphasizing the intersection between inclusive practices and social change. The objective is to examine how diversity initiatives, particularly those rooted in religious values of justice, compassion, and social responsibility, can challenge systemic class hierarchies. Methodologically, this research employs discourse analysis to critically assess existing literature on classism, its impact on marginalized communities, and the socioeconomic factors that sustain systemic inequities. The study explores diversity strategies implemented in educational institutions, corporate environments, and community organizations, integrating religious perspectives to highlight ethical imperatives for social equity. The findings reveal that initiatives such as affirmative action, equitable hiring practices, and community engagement effectively disrupt entrenched class structures. However, challenges such as tokenism, backlash, and resistance from dominant groups hinder their full implementation. The research underscores the necessity of adopting an intersectional approach, acknowledging how race, gender, and other social identities interact with class to create unique barriers. Religious teachings on economic justice, charity, and solidarity further reinforce the moral obligation to address class disparities. Theoretically, this study contributes to discussions on social equity by bridging diversity tactics with faith-based ethical principles, demonstrating how religious frameworks can enhance and legitimize efforts to combat classism. It calls for collaboration among policymakers, educators, faith leaders, and community advocates to foster environments where equitable access to opportunities and resources is recognized as a shared moral and social responsibility.

Keywords: Diversity, Classism, Inclusion, Equity, Social Justice

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INTRODUCTION

The power of diversity tactics in dismantling classism is a systemic form of discrimination that arises from socioeconomic disparities. It highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of how diversity initiatives can effectively address classism and the unique interplay between diversity initiatives and dismantling classist structures. The systemic nature of classism as an often-overlooked barrier to equality and the efficacy of diversity tactics as strategic tools for fostering inclusivity. This research challenges the prevailing notion that diversity efforts primarily target race and gender, highlighting the necessity for a multi-faceted approach that includes socioeconomic status as a critical variable in the discourse on equity. It also situates classism within the broader context of intersectionality, where individuals experience class-based discrimination in conjunction with other forms of oppression, which can compound their marginalisation. By examining the intersections of class with other identity markers, this study provides a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of individuals navigating complex socioeconomic landscapes.

Furthermore, the potential for diversity tactics to foster solidarity among diverse groups is crucial. When individuals from varying socioeconomic backgrounds collaborate, they can challenge classist stereotypes and advocate for systemic change.¹ By fostering an environment of inclusivity and mutual respect, organisations can leverage the strength of their diverse workforce to address the root causes of inequality. Classism, a term referring to prejudice or discrimination based on social class, has evolved significantly in the 21st century. It manifests in various forms, often intertwined with issues of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Classism has roots in feudal systems and capitalist economies, but the proliferation of technology and globalisation has transformed the landscape of class relations.^{2 3} Factors such as wealth, income, education, access to technology, and geographical location also play significant roles. The digital divide highlights how access to information and

¹ Diane J. Goodman, *Promoting diversity and social justice: Educating people from privileged groups*. Routledge, 2011.

² Will Atkinson, *Class*. John Wiley & Sons, 2023, p50

³ Benjamin Selwyn, "Twenty-first-century International Political Economy: A class-relational perspective." *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 3 (2015), p530.

technology can perpetuate class disparities, leaving lower-income individuals disadvantaged in an increasingly digital world.⁴

Contemporary classism is often invisible to those who do not experience it directly, leading to a lack of empathy and understanding.⁵ Societal narratives emphasising meritocracy may exacerbate this invisibility, ignoring the structural inequities that hinder opportunities for many, particularly those from historically marginalised communities.⁶ Classism can manifest in workplace hiring practices, culture, and promotional opportunities. Research indicates that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face biases during recruitment, with employers often favouring candidates with cultural capital aligned with higher social classes.^{7 8} Workplace policies and practices can inadvertently reinforce classism, such as the lack of paid family leave, flexible work hours, and access to professional development resources.

To effectively address classism in contemporary society, organisations must adopt comprehensive diversity tactics that extend beyond traditional dimensions of diversity. This includes providing training sessions that focus on the impact of classism, adopting inclusive recruitment practices, reviewing and revising workplace policies, and engaging with local communities to reduce economic disparities. To create more equitable communities, it is crucial to recognise the role of diversity in addressing classism. Diversity encompasses not only race and ethnicity but also socioeconomic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities. We can cultivate a more inclusive environment that fosters understanding, empathy, and change by embracing diversity. Understanding classism is essential for breaking down stereotypes and

⁴ Hannah Holmes, and Burgess Gemma, "Digital exclusion and poverty in the UK: How structural inequality shapes experiences of getting online." *Digital Geography and Society* 3 (2022).

⁵ Anthony Vincent Fernandez, and Zahavi Dan, "Basic empathy: Developing the concept of empathy from the ground up." *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 110 (2020): 103695.

⁶ Wise Tim, and A. Kim, Case. "Pedagogy for the privileged: Addressing inequality and injustice without shame or blame." In *Deconstructing privilege*, pp. 17-33. Routledge, 2013.

⁷ Phoebe K. Chua, Abraham Hillary, and Mazmanian Melissa, "Playing the hiring game: Class-based emotional experiences and tactics in elite hiring." *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 5, no. CSCW2 (2021).

⁸ Marko Pitesa, and M. Pillutla Madan, "Socioeconomic mobility and talent utilization of workers from poorer backgrounds: The overlooked importance of within-organization dynamics." *Academy of Management Annals* 13, no. 2 (2019), p759.

misconceptions about those living in poverty. Diversity tactics can broaden perspectives, promote empathy and understanding, influence policy and advocacy, encourage collaboration, and transform cultural narratives around classism.

By including voices from various socioeconomic backgrounds, organisations and institutions can gain valuable insights into the experiences of marginalised communities and inform policy-making processes. For example, educational institutions can develop curricula that reflect the realities of students from different class backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive learning environment. Diversity in leadership positions is crucial for addressing classism effectively. When decision-makers reflect on the communities they serve, they are more likely to advocate for policies that promote equity and dismantle class barriers. Organisations and governments must actively work to diversify their leadership, ensuring that individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds are included in the decision-making process.

The Middle Ages further entrenched class division through feudalism, where the hierarchical structure dictated individuals' rights, privileges, and opportunities based on birth.⁹ The Industrial Revolution marked a significant turning point in classism as societies transitioned from agrarian economies to industrialised ones, leading to stark contrasts between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.¹⁰ Labour movements sought to challenge the established class hierarchy, advocating for workers' rights and social reforms. However, the capitalist system often marginalised these movements and maintained class divisions. Classism progressed alongside other forms of discrimination, including racism and sexism, intertwining with them to create complex societal challenges.¹¹ Civil rights movements highlighted the intersectionality of class with race and gender, revealing how low-income individuals from marginalised backgrounds faced compounded disadvantages.

To dismantle classism, employing diversity tactics is essential. These tactics involve fostering inclusive environments that recognise and value diverse backgrounds,

⁹ Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the absolutist state*. Verso Books, 2013.

¹⁰ Henry Bernstein, "Revisiting agrarian transition: Reflections on long histories and current realities." *Critical Perspectives on Agrarian Transition* (2016), p89.

¹¹ Mike Cole, ed. *Education, equality and human rights: issues of gender, 'race', sexuality, disability and social class*. Taylor & Francis, 2022

experiences, and perspectives. Programs to increase representation in leadership roles, equitable hiring practices, and targeted support for underrepresented communities are crucial in addressing the systemic barriers perpetuating classism. Classism also restricts social mobility, creating a rigid class structure that hinders individuals' ability to improve their circumstances.¹² This belief that one's social class determines one's worth can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to poorer health outcomes and lower quality of life. The psychological impact of classism extends beyond economic challenges, with individuals experiencing feelings of inferiority, shame, and isolation. These emotional burdens can lead to mental health issues and diminished self-esteem, further entrenching the barriers they face.

Classism also has significant cultural implications, shaping societal norms and values. The predominant narrative often glorifies wealth and the lifestyles of the affluent while simultaneously devaluing the experiences and contributions of lower-class individuals.¹³ This cultural bias can manifest in various forms, such as media representations reinforcing stereotypes and institutional policies favouring the wealthy. Adopting diversity tactics that promote understanding, inclusivity, and equity is crucial to dismantle classism. By recognising and addressing the systemic nature of classism, we can forge a society that values all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background. We hope to break down the barriers that hold so many individuals back from achieving their full potential through collective effort and a commitment to diversity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative discourse analysis approach to examine how diversity initiatives can serve as catalysts for dismantling classism. The qualitative approach is most appropriate because it allows an in-depth exploration of subjective experiences, social structures, and theoretical frameworks related to classism and

¹² Federica Durante, and T. Fiske Susan, "How social-class stereotypes maintain inequality." *Current opinion in psychology* 18 (2017).

¹³ Larissa E. Hopkins, Shlasko Davey, and Valdivia Marjorie, "Classism." In *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, pp. 215-258. Routledge, 2022.

diversity. This study provides insight into how faith-based values align with diversity initiatives by analysing religious perspectives on justice, equity, and inclusion. The study incorporates multiple data collection techniques to ensure a well-rounded examination of the research problem. A comprehensive review of existing literature is conducted to establish a theoretical foundation. This includes academic journals, books, reports from organisations advocating for social justice, religious texts, and doctrinal interpretations.

The literature review focuses on classism, diversity tactics, intersectionality, and religious teachings on social equity. Case studies of organisations or institutions successfully implementing diversity strategies to combat classism are analysed. A content analysis of religious scriptures (such as the Bible and Quran) is undertaken to identify recurring themes on economic justice, social responsibility, and class inclusion. This study is guided by three key theoretical perspectives: Intersectionality Theory – Introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, this theory helps understand how classism intersects with other forms of discrimination (e.g., race, gender, and religion). Social Identity Theory (SIT) – Explains how individuals categorise themselves into groups, leading to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination, reinforcing classism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) – Highlights systemic barriers that perpetuate class inequalities, particularly in policy-making and institutional structures. By applying these frameworks, the study provides a deeper understanding of how diversity tactics can systematically challenge class-based discrimination.

Thematic Analysis: Data from interviews and religious texts are coded into key themes, such as economic justice, inclusion, and diversity tactics. Comparative Analysis: Different case studies are compared to identify best practices in implementing diversity initiatives. Narrative Analysis: Personal stories and lived experiences collected from interviews are analysed to provide qualitative insights into the impact of classism. Some diversity initiatives analysed may not have long-term data on their effectiveness. By integrating literature review, case studies, and thematic analysis of religious texts, the study provides valuable insights into how inclusive practices—rooted in both secular and religious principles—can drive social transformation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intersectionality, Social Identity, and Critical Race Theory

Intersectionality Theory, first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, is a theoretical framework that explains how social stratification, including classism, intersects and contributes to unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.¹⁴ It posits that individuals hold multiple identities, such as race, gender, sexuality and class, which interact in complex ways, influencing their social positioning and life experiences. By examining classism through intersectionality, we gain insight into the multi-faceted nature of privilege and oppression, allowing for a more nuanced approach to dismantling barriers that perpetuate inequality. Intersectionality Theory emphasises that social identities do not exist in isolation but intersect to shape individuals' lived experiences in ways that cannot be fully understood when examining each identity separately.¹⁵ For example, the experiences of a Black woman from a low-income background cannot be comprehensively understood by looking solely at her race, gender or class; instead, the interplay of these identities creates a distinct experience of marginalisation. Applying the Intersectionality Theory is essential for dismantling classism, as it encourages a comprehensive analysis of the various factors contributing to economic inequality.¹⁶ Classism is deeply intertwined with race, gender, disability, and other social categories, leading to unique challenges for individuals who occupy multiple marginalised identities. Organisations and institutions must adopt diversity tactics that reflect an intersectional understanding of inequality to dismantle classism effectively. This includes data collection and analysis, inclusive hiring practices, training and education, and community engagement. Organisations can create more effective and equitable solutions by focusing on the voices and experiences of those most affected by classism.

¹⁴ Devon W. Carbado, and I. Harris Cheryl, "Intersectionality at 30." *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 8 (2019).

¹⁵ Claire K. Robbins, and L. McGowan Brian, "Intersectional perspectives on gender and gender identity development." *New Directions for Student Services* 2016, no. 154 (2016).

¹⁶ Ashley M. Ruiz, Luebke Jeneile, Katie Klein, Kaylen Moore, Michael Gonzalez, Anne Dressel, and Lucy Mkandawire-Valhmu. "An integrative literature review and critical reflection of intersectionality theory." *Nursing inquiry* 28, no. 4 (2021).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a theoretical framework that explains how individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from their social groups.¹⁷ These groups vary widely, including nationality, ethnicity, religion, and social class. SIT offers insights into the mechanisms through which classism operates and how diversity tactics can effectively dismantle these barriers. Individuals categorise themselves and others into various social groups, leading to psychological processes such as in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination, which can perpetuate social hierarchies, including those based on class. This can lead to a hierarchy where individuals from higher social classes are viewed more favourably than those from lower classes, reinforcing classist attitudes and behaviours. The implications of SIT are profound, as they suggest that classism is not merely a result of individual prejudices but is also deeply embedded in social structures and identities.¹⁸

Diversity tactics that promote inclusivity and representation in various contexts can play a crucial role in counteracting the effects of classism. By fostering environments where multiple social identities are acknowledged and valued, organisations can work towards dismantling the rigid boundaries that typically define social class structures. Awareness and education about the mechanisms of classism and the value of diverse social identities can help shift perceptions. Ensuring diverse voices are represented in decision-making processes, including leadership roles and discussions, can challenge dominant narratives that often marginalise lower socioeconomic groups. Community-building initiatives encouraging collaboration across social classes can help break down barriers and foster relationships, reducing stereotypes.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that addresses the systemic issues of classism within social inequalities.¹⁹ It posits that racism is not just an individual prejudice but a systemic and ingrained component of societal structures,

¹⁷ Sabine Trepte, and S. Loy Laura, "Social identity theory and self-categorization theory." *The international encyclopedia of media effects* 63 (2017).

¹⁸ Barbara Gray, and Jennifer J. Kish-Gephart. "Encountering social class differences at work: How "class work" perpetuates inequality." *Academy of Management Review* 38, no. 4 (2013), p689.

¹⁹ Richard Delgado, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical race theory: An introduction*. Vol. 87. New York University Press, 2023.

which permeates law, policies, and cultural norms. CRT emphasises the concept of intersectionality, acknowledging that individuals experience overlapping forms of discrimination based on their race, gender, class, and other identity markers.²⁰ This lens reveals how classism is deeply intertwined with racial inequalities, such as access to quality education, employment opportunities, and healthcare for communities of colour. By applying CRT to classism, we can better understand how societal structures uphold class disparities. Legal and economic systems often favour those who are already privileged, creating a feedback loop that reinforces existing inequalities. CRT encourages a critical examination of these systemic issues, advocating for transformative changes that address the root causes of classism. The role of narratives and counter-narratives is also significant in CRT. Scholars argue that the experiences and stories of marginalised groups must be highlighted to challenge dominant societal narratives perpetuating classism and racism.²¹ By amplifying voices that have been historically silenced, CRT seeks to create a more equitable discourse around class and race.

This research highlights the importance of diversity tactics in dismantling classist structures that perpetuate inequality. The purposive effect of these tactics is multi-faceted; they foster a sense of belonging among marginalised individuals and challenge the status quo by disrupting classist narratives. These tactics catalyse change, encouraging individuals and institutions to reconsider their roles in perpetuating classist structures. By engaging in this discourse, we can better comprehend the intersectionality of social issues, recognising how classism interacts with racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. This comprehensive understanding can foster solidarity among marginalised groups and unite their efforts towards dismantling systemic inequalities. By prioritising diversity, we can empower marginalised individuals and promote a more harmonious society where opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic background.

²⁰ Anoosh W. Khan, "Critical Race Theory: The Intersectionality of Race, Gender and Social Justice." *Putaj Humanities & Social Sciences* 23, no. 1 (2016).

²¹ Harriet Curtis-Boles, Ana Guisela Chupina, and Yuki Okubo. "Social justice challenges: Students of color and critical incidents in the graduate classroom." *Training and Education in Professional Psychology* 14, no. 2 (2020).

Classism, a form of discrimination based on social class, remains a pervasive issue in societies worldwide. Despite the growth of diversity and inclusion initiatives, significant barriers persist in dismantling classism. These barriers include a lack of awareness and understanding of class issues within institutions, rigid organisational structures, limited resources for diversity initiatives, tokenistic practices, resistance to change, inadequate measurement and accountability, and fragmented approaches. A lack of awareness and understanding of class issues within institutions can lead to superficial diversity initiatives that fail to address the root causes of class disparities.²² Institutional rigidity, often manifested in hierarchical structures, can stifle innovation and discourage marginalised voices from contributing to discussions about classism. Limited resources for diversity initiatives can result in insufficient support for marginalised groups, hindering the creation of an inclusive environment where individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds can thrive.

Tokenism and superficial engagement can also undermine the effectiveness of diversity initiatives and perpetuate classist structures.²³ Resistance to change is another barrier to advancing diversity efforts in the face of classism. Long-standing traditions and norms within institutions can create a culture that is reluctant to embrace new ideas or strategies, leading to pushback against initiatives designed to promote inclusivity. Inadequate measurement and accountability mechanisms can lead to a lack of direction and effectiveness in diversity initiatives. Many organisations fail to establish clear metrics for success, making it challenging to assess progress in dismantling classism.²⁴ The absence of accountability can lead to complacency, where organisations feel they have made sufficient efforts without truly addressing underlying issues. By recognising and addressing these institutional challenges, organisations can take meaningful steps toward fostering a more inclusive and diverse society.

²² Prudence L. Carter, Russell Skiba, Mariella I. Arredondo, and Mica Pollock. "You can't fix what you don't look at: Acknowledging race in addressing racial discipline disparities." *Urban education* 52, no. 2 (2017).

²³ Vincent Adejumo, "Beyond diversity, inclusion, and belonging." *Leadership* 17, no. 1 (2021), p70.

²⁴ Jennifer J. Kish-Gephart, Kristie JN Moergen, Jacqueline D. Tilton, and Barbara Gray. "Social class and work: A review and organizing framework." *Journal of Management* 49, no. 1 (2023), p550.

Diversity is a crucial aspect of promoting a more inclusive society, but it often faces resistance due to societal norms and values prioritising certain classes. These barriers can be categorised into several key areas: cultural norms and values, stereotypes and prejudice, fear of change, economic interests, and lack of representation. Cultural norms and values often overlook the systemic obstacles individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face, leading to scepticism or hostility towards diversity initiatives.²⁵ Stereotypes about lower-income individuals often paint them as lazy, uneducated, or undeserving, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and discrimination. This fear can manifest as resistance to diversity initiatives, leading to a reluctance to discuss classism or support policies that promote equity.

Economic interests also significantly influence societal resistance to diversity initiatives.²⁶ Those in positions of power often prioritise profit and financial gain over social equity, making diversity efforts perceived as economically unfeasible or disruptive to established business models. This resistance can stifle innovation and limit opportunities for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, further entrenching classist structures within the workforce. Lastly, a lack of representation in decision-making processes exacerbates societal resistance to diversity. When individuals from diverse backgrounds are excluded from leadership roles, their perspectives and experiences remain unheard, perpetuating a cycle where policies and initiatives fail to address the nuanced needs of marginalised communities. The lack of representation can bolster the perception that diversity efforts are merely performative, leading to scepticism and resistance among those who might otherwise support such initiatives.

Diversity as a Tool for Dismantling Classism

Diversity is crucial to breaking barriers and dismantling classism in today's interconnected world. It encompasses differences, including race, gender, age, sexual

²⁵ Anna Triandafyllidou, "Addressing cultural, ethnic & religious diversity challenges in Europe." *Accept-Pluralism. Eu* (2011).

²⁶ Caryn J. Block, and Debra A. Noumair. "Understanding diversity dynamics in systems: Social equality as an organization change issue." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 53, no. 2 (2017).

orientation, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. By embracing diversity, organisations can challenge and transform the structures that uphold classist ideologies, fostering a more equitable society.²⁷ One way diversity acts as a catalyst for dismantling classism is by creating inclusive environments. Organisations prioritising diversity and inclusion are better equipped to understand and address the unique challenges individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds face.²⁸

They can develop policies and practices that promote equity, such as equitable hiring processes, fair compensation, and accessible professional development opportunities. Inclusive environments also encourage collaboration and innovation, empowering individuals from marginalised classes to voice their ideas and contribute meaningfully. Education and awareness play a significant role in leveraging diversity in the fight against classism.²⁹ Diversity training programs and initiatives can help dismantle stereotypes and biases perpetuating classist attitudes. Educational institutions embracing diversity can shape future generations' perspectives by integrating diverse curricula that reflect various socioeconomic experiences. This academic approach not only aids in breaking down class barriers but also nurtures a culture of inclusivity and respect. Diversity also plays a crucial role in empowering marginalised communities.³⁰ By amplifying the voices of historically silenced individuals, organisations can advocate for policies that address the systemic inequalities associated with classism.³¹ This advocacy can take various forms, including community engagement initiatives, partnerships with local organisations, and support

²⁷ Rajendrakumar Muljibhai Parmar, and Joshi Damini, "Organisational diversity and equal opportunities for tribal population." *Minorities of India: Issues and Challenges* 87 (2024).

²⁸ Temitayo Oluwaseun Jejenewa, Zamanjomane Mhlongo Noluthando, and Olaide Jejenewa Titilola, "Diversity and inclusion in the workplace: a conceptual framework comparing the USA and Nigeria." *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research* 6, no. 5 (2024), p1377.

²⁹ Uma M. Jayakumar, M. Garces Liliana, and J. Park Julie, "Reclaiming diversity: Advancing the next generation of diversity research toward racial equity." *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research: Published under the sponsorship of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)* (2018), p67.

³⁰ Ifzal Ahmad, and M. Rezaul Islam, "Empowerment and participation: Key strategies for inclusive development." In *Building Strong Communities: Ethical Approaches to Inclusive Development*, pp. 47-68. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2024.

³¹ Kristine De Welde, and Andi Stepnick, eds. *Disrupting the culture of silence: Confronting gender inequality and making change in higher education*. Taylor & Francis, 2023.

for grassroots movements aiming to uplift disadvantaged groups. Organisations can challenge the systemic barriers perpetuating class inequality by recognising and valuing diverse perspectives. Organisations and communities can challenge entrenched social hierarchies and foster a more equitable environment by prioritising diversity.

Additionally, one of the most significant ways diversity serves as a tool for dismantling classism is through representation. Individuals from lower socioeconomic classes hold positions of power and influence, advocating for policies that address systemic inequalities. Their presence in leadership roles can challenge existing narratives that perpetuate classist attitudes and inspire others to recognise the value of diverse perspectives. Through education and awareness, participants can develop empathy and a deeper understanding of the barriers marginalised communities face, ultimately leading to collective action. Organisations and communities can challenge systemic inequalities and create a more inclusive society by prioritising representation, promoting dialogue and implementing equitable practices.

Diversity Tactics for Dismantling Classism

Classism is a systemic issue that perpetuates inequality and hinders progress for individuals and communities. Effective strategies are needed to dismantle these barriers, including implementing diversity tactics aimed at fostering inclusivity and equity. Education and awareness are essential pillars in the fight against classism. Education is fundamental for challenging and dismantling classism and empowering individuals with the knowledge necessary to recognise and confront class-based discrimination.³² Curriculum reform is one primary strategy for fostering awareness about classism by integrating lessons on social class, economic disparity, and the historical context of classism into educational institutions. Incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum can enhance students' understanding of class dynamics and foster an environment of inclusivity and respect for diversity. Community outreach programs significantly raise awareness about classism, including

³² Mike Cole, ed. *Education, equality and human rights: issues of gender, 'race', sexuality, disability and social class*. Taylor & Francis, 2022.

workshops, seminars, and discussions.³³ Engaging community leaders and activists ensures that messages resonate with diverse audiences and provide resources and support systems for those affected by classism.

Digital literacy and access are crucial in the digital age, promoting access to information and enabling individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to engage with educational resources, advocacy platforms, and community networks.³⁴ Organisations should prioritise initiatives that bridge the digital divide, offering training and resources to enhance digital skills. Advocacy and activism are essential for creating meaningful change. Encouraging individuals to advocate for their communities fosters a sense of agency and empowerment. This can be achieved through mentorship programs, leadership training, and grassroots organising opportunities. By mobilising individuals to speak out against classism, society can cultivate a culture of activism demanding accountability from institutions perpetuating inequality. Engaging in dialogue and collaboration with diverse groups can amplify these efforts, creating a unified front that challenges systemic barriers.

Organisations and communities must adopt effective diversity tactics that promote inclusivity and equity to dismantle classism. Inclusive policies and practices are the foundation for creating environments that embrace diversity and foster equity.³⁵ These initiatives level the playing field for individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and dismantle the systemic barriers that perpetuate classism. Key components of inclusive policies and practices include equitable recruitment and hiring processes, access to education and training, supportive workplace environments, diversity and inclusion training, community engagement and partnerships and data-driven decision-making. However, implementing diversity tactics can significantly

³³ Blake A. Allan, Patton O. Garriott, and Chesleigh N. Keene. "Outcomes of social class and classism in first-and continuing-generation college students." *Journal of counseling psychology* 63, no. 4 (2016): 487.

³⁴ Julio Meneses, and Josep Maria Mominó. "Putting digital literacy in practice: How schools contribute to digital inclusion in the network society." *The Information Society* 26, no. 3 (2010).

³⁵ Chima Abimbola Eden, Onyebuchi Nneamaka Chisom, and Idowu Sulaimon Adeniyi. "Cultural competence in education: strategies for fostering inclusivity and diversity awareness." *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2024), p385.

contribute to dismantling classism by fostering inclusive environments that empower marginalised groups.³⁶

Empowerment is a multi-faceted approach that involves enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to make decisions, access resources, and advocate for their rights. In the context of classism, it is crucial for several reasons:

1. Empowerment enables individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to gain confidence and assert their rights within various societal structures such as education, employment, and healthcare. Organisations can foster an environment where these individuals feel valued and recognised by providing access to resources, training, and mentorship.
2. Education and skill development are primary avenues for empowerment. Educational institutions and organisations can implement programs specifically designed to support students and professionals from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as scholarships, mentorship programs, and internships. This equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge, reducing the impact of classism.
3. Advocacy and representation are essential for empowering marginalised groups. Promoting diversity within leadership positions across various sectors, including corporate, political, and non-profit organisations, allows individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to advocate for policies and practices that address class disparities.
4. Community building and networking opportunities are critical aspects of empowerment. Encouraging the formation of networks among individuals from marginalised groups provides them with support systems that facilitate personal and professional growth. These networks can also serve as platforms for sharing resources, experiences, and strategies for overcoming barriers posed by classism.
5. Economic empowerment is pivotal in dismantling classism. Organisations can implement diversity tactics that focus on providing financial literacy programs, access to capital, and entrepreneurship training for individuals from lower socioeconomic

³⁶ Diane J. Goodman, *Promoting diversity and social justice: Educating people from privileged groups*. Routledge, 2011

backgrounds. By breaking barriers, the power of diversity tactics plays a crucial role in shaping a future where classism is no longer an obstacle to opportunity and success.

Collaborative initiatives are partnerships among various stakeholders, including government entities, non-profits, businesses and community organisations, to address shared objectives and reduce classism.³⁷ These alliances harness the strengths of diverse groups to create comprehensive solutions to minimise classism. Collaborative initiatives can significantly amplify their impact by pooling resources, knowledge, and expertise, fostering an inclusive environment that empowers marginalised communities.³⁸ Key components of collaborative initiatives include shared goals and vision, diverse representation, resource sharing, and building trust and relationships.³⁹ Successful initiatives begin with a clear and shared understanding of the problem, ensuring that all parties work cohesively towards achieving the same objectives. Examples of successful collaborative initiatives include partnerships between local governments and community organisations aiming at providing affordable housing and mentorship programs connecting individuals from underprivileged backgrounds with professionals in various industries.⁴⁰ Measuring the success and impact of these initiatives is crucial to understanding their effectiveness in dismantling classism. Regular evaluation allows stakeholders to adapt strategies, ensuring they remain relevant and responsive to the communities' needs.

Case Studies

Diversity tactics have become a powerful tool in dismantling classism, particularly in the workplace. Companies worldwide recognise the importance of diverse perspectives on innovation, decision-making, and societal progress. Starbucks, for example, has been actively implementing diversity tactics by hiring opportunity

³⁷ Tom Wolff, Meredith Minkler, Susan M. Wolfe, Bill Berkowitz, Linda Bowen, Frances Dunn Butterfoss, and K. S. Lee, "Collaborating for equity and justice: Moving beyond collective impact." *Nonprofit quarterly* 9, no. 2017 (2017).

³⁸ Neeta Baporikar, ed. *Infrastructure Development Strategies for Empowerment and Inclusion*. IGI Global, 2024.

³⁹ Chris Huxham, and Siv Vangen, *Managing to collaborate: The theory and practice of collaborative advantage*. Routledge, 2013.

⁴⁰ Donya Ahmadi, "Serving diverse communities: the role of community initiatives in delivering services to poverty neighbourhoods." *Cities* 69 (2017).

youth and addressing class disparities through its “Starbucks College Achievement Plan”.⁴¹ This initiative has resulted in over 30,000 partners participating in the program, demonstrating the potential for corporate initiatives to break the cycle of poverty. A global consumer goods company, Unilever has committed to gender diversity by eliminating gender stereotypes in advertising and promoting gender equity within its workforce.⁴² As of 2023, women hold 50% of their management positions, highlighting how diversity tactics can dismantle classist barriers that disproportionately affect women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Google’s approach to diversity and inclusion is another compelling case study. The tech giant has implemented various initiatives to increase the representation of underrepresented groups, including those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Google’s “Diversity and Inclusion” team actively works to recruit talent from diverse pipelines, focusing on educational outreach and partnerships with organisations serving disadvantaged communities. One notable program is the “Google for Startups” initiative, which supports entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds, providing resources, mentorship, and funding opportunities.⁴³ In 2021, the program reported a 60% increase in participation from women and minority entrepreneurs.⁴⁴ Conversely, the NFL has faced criticism for its lack of diversity, particularly in leadership positions.⁴⁵ In response, the league instituted the Rooney Rule in 2003, which requires teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching and senior football operation positions.⁴⁶ While the rule’s effectiveness has been debated, it represents a significant

⁴¹ James E. Austin, *The collaboration challenge: How nonprofits and businesses succeed through strategic alliances*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

⁴² Mukhtiar Ahmed, "The Impact of Workforce Diversity on Organizational Performance: A Case Study of Unilever." *iRAPA International Journal of Business Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024), p28.

⁴³ Valentina A. Assenova, and Raphael Amit. "Poised for growth: Exploring the relationship between accelerator program design and startup performance." *Strategic Management Journal* 45, no. 6 (2024).

⁴⁴ Natasha Conley, and Diana Bilimoria. "Barriers and mitigating strategies of entrepreneurial business growth: The role of entrepreneur race and gender." *Entrepreneurship Research Journal* 12, no. 3 (2022).

⁴⁵ DeMaurice F. Smith, and Carl Lasker. "The Rooney Suggestion: How the " Rule" Has Failed to Defeat Institutional Barriers to Equitable Hiring Practices in the NFL and Recommendations for Meaningful Reform." *Yale L. & Pol'y Rev.* 42 (2023).

⁴⁶ Cynthia DuBois, "The impact of “soft” affirmative action policies on minority hiring in executive leadership: The case of the NFL's Rooney Rule." *American Law and Economics Review* 18, no. 1 (2015).

step toward addressing classism and promoting diversity within a traditionally homogenous environment.

Classism is deeply entrenched in many societies, including Africa, and its repercussions often manifest in educational disparities, economic inequalities, and social exclusion. However, integrating diversity tactics within educational institutions has shown promise in dismantling these barriers. Several case studies highlight the impact of diversity initiatives on classism at the university level in Africa.

The University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa, has implemented various diversity initiatives to address socioeconomic disparities in its student population. The Fees Must Fall movement emerged, advocating for affordable education and increased financial aid for underprivileged students.⁴⁷ In response, UCT adopted a more inclusive admissions policy, focusing on socioeconomic factors alongside academic performance. The impact of these diversity tactics has been significant, with the percentage of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds increasing from 36% in 2015 to 45% in 2020.⁴⁸ Additionally, UCT established the UCT Financial Aid Office, which expanded its funding to support students from low-income families, thereby reducing the financial barriers often accompanying higher education.

Makerere University, Uganda, has recognised the need to address classism through various interventions. In recent years, the university has launched initiatives aimed at increasing access to education for marginalised communities and low-income students. One such initiative is establishing a scholarship program that specifically targets students from rural areas, who often face economic challenges in pursuing higher education.⁴⁹ The success of this program highlights the importance of creating supportive networks that empower disadvantaged students, effectively dismantling classist barriers in the academic landscape. The University of Nairobi in Kenya has implemented a comprehensive approach to combat classism through diversity tactics.

⁴⁷ Tonny Nyundu, "Fees Must Fall" in a Neoliberal University?: A Socio-political Interrogation of the 2015-2016 Student Protests and the State Responses in South Africa." PhD diss., University of Newcastle, Australia, 2021.

⁴⁸ Jennifer Bonti-Ankomah, "Equity, diversity and inclusion at the University of Cape Town, South Africa: The experience of Black women academics." PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2020.

⁴⁹ Christina L Hand, "A case study of Makerere University in Uganda through the lens of US land-grant higher education." PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2023.

The university has launched outreach programs in underprivileged areas, including workshops, career counselling, and scholarships for low-income students.⁵⁰ Additionally, the university has implemented an affirmative action policy in its admissions process, increasing enrollment from disadvantaged backgrounds. This has resulted in a more representative demographic of the nation's socioeconomic diversity, promoting inclusivity and enriching the academic environment by fostering diverse perspectives.

Challenges and Criticisms

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have gained significant traction recently, as organisations, schools, and communities recognise the need to address systemic inequalities, particularly classism. However, resistance to these initiatives can stem from various factors, including cultural inertia, misunderstanding of diversity goals, backlash and polarisation, resource allocation concerns, and scepticism. Cultural inertia within organisations is a primary challenge, as many institutions have deeply ingrained norms and practices prioritising homogeneity over diversity.⁵¹ This resistance is often rooted in fear of change, as stakeholders may perceive diversity initiatives as threatening their established power structures. For example, employees who have historically benefited from a lack of diversity may feel their positions are jeopardised by efforts to include underrepresented groups. This fear can lead to pushback against DEI initiatives, resulting in a lack of engagement and support from those in positions of influence.

Misunderstanding diversity goals is another significant challenge, as some stakeholders may view these efforts as mere compliance exercises rather than transformative tools for fostering an inclusive environment.⁵² This perception can lead to superficial implementations of diversity tactics, such as tokenism, where

⁵⁰ Cynthia A Oduor, "Private Financing for University Education and Implications on Participation: Evidence From Kisumu County." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2019.

⁵¹ Cristina Novoa, and Fathali M. Moghaddam. "21 Policies for Managing Cultural." *The Oxford Handbook of Multicultural Identity* (2014).

⁵² Petra Kuenkel, Elisabeth Kuhn, Dominic Stucker, and Douglas F. Williamson. *Leading transformative change collectively: A practitioner guide to realizing the SDGs*. Taylor & Francis, 2021.

organisations superficially meet diversity quotas without substantially changing their culture or practices. Such approaches can breed resentment and further entrench classism as they fail to address the underlying issues of inequality. Resource allocation concerns are another barrier to the effective implementation of diversity initiatives. Organisations may resist these investments, particularly if diversity efforts detract from their core business objectives. Diversity initiatives may fail to achieve their intended outcomes without adequate resources, leaving systemic inequalities unaddressed. To navigate these challenges, organisations must be transparent, accountable, and committed to addressing the root causes of inequality.

Diversity initiatives are often seen as crucial in combating classism but face numerous challenges and criticisms. One of the most common criticisms is tokenism, where organisations use diversity tactics to demonstrate compliance with societal expectations or to enhance their public image rather than genuinely promoting inclusivity.⁵³ This can lead to the superficial inclusion of marginalised individuals, reinforcing feelings of alienation among those intended to benefit from these initiatives. Another significant limitation of diversity tactics is their limited scope. Many initiatives focus on increasing representation within organisations without addressing the underlying structural inequalities perpetuating classism. For example, diversifying a leadership team does not guarantee equitable policies and practices. A comprehensive approach that includes changes to hiring practices pay equity, and career advancement opportunities is necessary for diversity initiatives to achieve meaningful change.

Another challenge is the misalignment of goals within organisations. While some stakeholders may genuinely seek equity and inclusion, others may prioritise profitability or maintaining the status quo.⁵⁴ This can result in half-hearted efforts that fail to resonate with those most affected by classism. The effectiveness of these tactics often depends on a unified commitment from all levels of an organisation, which can be challenging to achieve. Resistance to change can also arise from individuals who

⁵³ Samuel Mugo, and Korbla P. Pupilampu. "Beyond tokenism and objectivity: theoretical reflections on a transformative equity, diversity, and inclusion agenda for higher education in Canada." *SN social sciences* 2, no. 10 (2022).

⁵⁴ Mark R. DesJardine, Muhan Zhang, and Wei Shi. "How shareholders impact stakeholder interests: A review and map for future research." *Journal of management* 49, no. 1 (2023), p420.

perceive these initiatives as threats to their privilege or power. This resistance can manifest in various forms, including backlash against policies promoting equity, unwillingness to engage in difficult conversations about privilege, and hostility towards marginalised groups. Overcoming this resistance requires sustained effort, education, and commitment from leadership. Lastly, many diversity initiatives overlook the nuances of intersectionality, which involves how various forms of discrimination intersect and compound one another. By failing to recognise the complexity of individuals' lived experiences, these initiatives may perpetuate a one-dimensional understanding of diversity that does not fully address the realities faced by multi-marginalised individuals.⁵⁵

Future Directions

Diversity tactics are crucial in fostering an inclusive environment that empowers individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds. To achieve meaningful change, it is essential to explore future directions that can provide a roadmap for overcoming challenges and maximising opportunities in this domain. Understanding how technology can perpetuate or mitigate classism is critical as digital platforms become increasingly integral to our lives. Comparative studies on classism across different cultures and countries can enrich the dialogue and provide a broader understanding of effective diversity tactics that transcend borders. To overcome challenges in dismantling classism effectively, several strategies can be employed:

1. Building collaborative networks: Establishing partnerships among various stakeholders—non-profits, businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies—can create a unified front against classism. Comprehensive training programs that focus on raising awareness about classism and its implications are vital, aiming at individuals in positions of power and the general public to foster empathy and understanding.

⁵⁵ Marlén Miranda, "Gender-based violence: A global crisis that is handled ineffectually." *Trinity College* (2020).

2. Advocating for policy changes that address systemic inequalities is crucial, including taxation, housing, healthcare, and education reforms to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic status.

3. Empowerment initiatives: Programs that empower individuals from low-income communities to take charge of their futures, such as mentorship programs, entrepreneurship training, and financial literacy workshops, are essential.

Future directions should focus on fostering an inclusive environment that acknowledges the diverse challenges faced by different socioeconomic groups and actively works to address these disparities through strategic advocacy initiatives. Effective advocacy involves amplifying the voices of the underrepresented and creating platforms for individuals from lower-income backgrounds to share their experiences and insights. This approach raises awareness and fosters community and solidarity among individuals facing similar challenges. It encourages policymakers to consider the lived experiences of these groups when designing legislation aimed at reducing class disparities. Building alliances across various social justice movements is another significant future direction for dismantling classism. Intersectionality must be at the forefront of these collaborations, acknowledging that classism intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and ableism. Collaborative campaigns can leverage the strengths of each movement, ensuring that classism is addressed in the broader context of social equity.

Effective advocacy must also target local, state, and national legislative change. Advocacy organisations should lobby for policies that directly address the root causes of classism, such as affordable housing, access to quality education, and fair wages. Building relationships with policymakers is crucial, as advocacy groups should engage in regular dialogue with elected officials, providing them with data, personal stories, and expert insights highlighting classism's systemic nature. Promoting education and awareness about classism is a vital component of future strategies. Educational initiatives should inform the public about the complexities of class issues and how they intersect with other social justice concerns. Schools and universities should incorporate classes and resources that explore economic inequality and social justice, equipping the next generation with the knowledge and skills to engage in advocacy work.

CONCLUSION

The discourse on diversity tactics in dismantling classism emphasises addressing systemic barriers perpetuating social and economic inequality. Strategies such as inclusive hiring practices, promoting diverse leadership, and creating equitable access to resources and opportunities can be taken to break down barriers and foster a more inclusive society. By embracing diversity and actively working to dismantle classism, organisations and communities can harness the collective power of different perspectives, experiences, and talents to drive meaningful and sustainable change. Individuals, institutions, and policymakers must commit to ongoing efforts to challenge and disrupt structures that uphold classism, championing a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. Pursuing diversity and equity is a moral imperative and a strategic advantage for society. In conclusion, the paper emphasises the pivotal role of diversity tactics in driving meaningful progress towards a more just and egalitarian society. It emphasises the importance of collective action, allyship, and advocacy in challenging class-based discrimination and fostering environments that honour the dignity and worth of all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

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