

Running Head: Transcending Race, Class and Cultural Differences

**TRANSCENDING RACE, CLASS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES  
TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Transcending race, class, and cultural differences to promote academic engagement and achievement is a critical goal for educators and institutions committed to fostering equity and inclusion in education. We want to bring forward to attention that students come from diverse backgrounds, and their experiences and needs may vary significantly. Educators should adopt culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge and incorporate students' diverse cultural backgrounds into the curriculum. We suggest trying to use diverse materials and examples, celebrating cultural holidays, and understanding how cultural experiences may affect a student's learning style.

Diversifying the teaching and administrative staff will provide role models and mentors for students from ~~different socio-economic backgrounds.~~ Partnerships with community organizations can provide additional support for students. Implementing mentoring and support programs might also assist students, especially those from less privileged backgrounds, in their academic journey. This includes peer mentoring, tutoring, and academic advising.

Organizing cultural celebrations, events, and awareness programs that celebrate diversity can heavily foster a sense of belonging for all students. We hope to involve parents and family members in such events so as to make the students feel confident and comfortable in a new environment. This can help bridge the gap between home and school, ensuring a more supportive learning environment. Teaching conflict resolution and restorative justice practices is a great method of addressing conflicts or misunderstandings that may arise among students of diverse backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Transcendence, Organizing, Diversity, Race, Class, Culture

### **Introduction**

Class, culture, and racial barriers are significant factors that can impede access to education and contribute to disparities in educational outcomes. These barriers often intersect and compound, creating complex challenges for individuals seeking equitable educational opportunities.

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- **Racial Barriers** - Systemic racism in education can manifest in various ways, including discriminatory practices, unequal distribution of resources, and biased disciplinary actions. Students of color may face disproportionate challenges in accessing quality education.  
Stereotypes and cultural biases can impact expectations and opportunities for racial and ethnic minority students.
- **Class Barriers** - Socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in determining access to quality education. Families with lower income may struggle to afford educational resources, such as tutoring, books, and technology, placing their children at a disadvantage. Disparities in funding between schools in affluent and economically disadvantaged areas can lead to variations in the quality of facilities, teachers, and educational programs, perpetuating inequality.
- **Cultural Barriers** - Cultural differences can affect the educational experience, as schools may not always be culturally responsive. Curriculum content, teaching methods, and school policies that fail to consider cultural diversity can alienate students from different backgrounds. Language barriers can be a significant obstacle, particularly for students from non-native English-speaking families.

## **RACIAL ISSUES/RACISM**

### **What do we mean by Racism?**

Racism, the belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features; and that some races are innately superior to others.

### **How does and has racism/racial issues appear as a barrier towards academic progression?**

Racism operates as a formidable barrier to academic education by perpetuating systemic inequities that manifest across various aspects of the educational landscape. From unequal resource allocation, discriminatory policies, and biased assessments to the underrepresentation of minorities in teaching staff and leadership roles, racism shapes an environment where opportunities are not distributed equitably. Students of color often contend with stereotypes, low expectations, and a lack of cultural relevance in the curriculum, hindering their ability to access quality education. Disciplinary disparities and the presence of a hostile racial climate further compound the challenges, creating an atmosphere that can impede the academic progress and well-being of affected individuals.

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Throughout history, there have been numerous instances of racism in education, reflecting broader societal prejudices. Here are a few notable examples:

- 1. Segregation in the United States:** Before the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown versus Board of Education* in 1954, racial segregation was widespread in U.S. schools. The "separate but equal" doctrine led to the establishment of segregated schools for African American students, which were often underfunded and provided inferior resources compared to their white counterparts.
- 2. Apartheid in South Africa:** During the apartheid era (1948-1994) in South Africa, the government enforced a racially segregated education system. Schools for black students were systematically underfunded and focused on providing basic education to prepare them for subordinate roles in society.
- 3. Indian Residential Schools in Canada:** In Canada, Indian Residential Schools were established in the 19th century to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture. These schools were often operated by religious organizations, and students were subjected to cultural suppression, abuse, and neglect, leading to long-term trauma.
- 4. Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States:** In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, discriminatory laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, targeted Chinese immigrants in the United States. Chinese children faced segregation and unequal educational opportunities, reflecting broader anti-immigrant sentiment.
- 5. Jim Crow Laws in the Southern United States:** In the post-Civil War era in the U.S., Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation, extending to schools. African American students attended poorly funded and substandard schools, perpetuating educational inequalities.
- 6. Japanese American Internment during World War II:** In the U.S. during World War II, the government forcibly relocated and interned Japanese Americans. This included children who were often removed from their schools, disrupting their education and perpetuating discriminatory practices.

## **TRANSCENDING RACIAL BARRIERS FOR EDUCATION**

We would like to put forward certain implementations that can, in theory, assist in reducing the extensive racial issues if put to practice diligently and with proper enforcements. Given below are some of the theoretical suggestions that may start small in effect but reach wide in solution over a longer scale of implementation -

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**Having a culturally responsive education and environment** - Implementing curriculum that reflect diverse perspectives and histories, fostering an inclusive educational environment that respects and celebrates different cultures.

**Allocation of equitable resources** - Ensure fair distribution of educational resources, including funding, quality teachers, and modern facilities, to eliminate disparities between schools in different communities.

**Diverse Representation** - Increasing diversity among educators, administrators, and leadership positions will increase employment of skilled labor and also benefit the respective nation's economy and 'Gross Domestic Product' (GDP) Having a teaching staff that reflects the student body's diversity promotes understanding, reduces stereotypes, and provides positive role models.

**Anti-Bias Training** - Implementing regular anti-bias training for educators and administrators to raise awareness of implicit biases and equip them with strategies to create unbiased, inclusive classrooms will help promote awareness and empathetic understanding.

**Elimination of Discriminatory Policies** - Evaluate and eliminate policies that disproportionately affect certain racial or ethnic groups, such as tracking systems that lead to segregation or disciplinary policies that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline as every student regardless of their past deserves another chance to redeem themselves and pursue education. Leaders, and organizations can help create a more supportive and inclusive educational environment. To tackle such a deep-rooted social issue requires long-term commitment, dismantling systemic racism requires sustained efforts and ongoing evaluation.

## **CLASSISM**

### **What is Classism?**

Discrimination based on class, also known as classism, refers to the unfair treatment or prejudice against individuals or groups based on their socioeconomic class or social and economic status. It involves the differential treatment of people due to factors such as wealth, income, education, occupation, or social standing.

## **How is Classism a barrier towards academic progression?**

*Limited Access to Quality Education* - Individuals from lower socioeconomic classes have limited access to quality educational resources, including well-funded schools, experienced teachers, and up-to-date learning materials. This lack of resources can hinder academic achievement and limit the overall educational experience.

*Unequal Access to Educational Opportunities* - Prevalent amongst the underprivileged as higher-income families often have the means to provide additional educational opportunities for their children, such as private tutoring, extracurricular activities, and test preparation courses. This can create a gap in academic preparedness and achievement between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

*Financial Barriers* - One of the major and prominent barriers as the cost of education, including tuition, fees, and related expenses, can be a significant discrepancy for individuals from lower-income families. This can result in limited access to higher education or force students to take on substantial debt, affecting their academic choices and future prospects.

*Cultural Bias in Education* - Standardized tests and educational systems may reflect cultural biases that disadvantage students from certain socioeconomic backgrounds. This can lead to underrepresentation and the perpetuation of stereotypes about the academic abilities of individuals from lower classes.

1. **Social and Emotional Factors**: Economic disparities can contribute to social and emotional challenges for students from lower socioeconomic classes. Issues such as housing instability, food insecurity, and family stress can impact a student's ability to focus on academics and engage in learning.
2. **Stigmatization and Stereotyping**: Students from lower socioeconomic classes may face stigmatization and stereotyping from peers and educators, which can affect their self-esteem and academic performance. Prejudice and bias based on class can create a hostile learning environment.

## **TRANSCENDING CLASSISM FOR EDUCATION**

Transcending discrimination based on class to improve academic education requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that addresses systemic issues and promotes equality of opportunity. Here are some theoretical approaches to reduce such societal discrepancies -

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**Equal Access to Quality Education:** Ensure that all schools, regardless of location or socioeconomic status of the community, receive adequate funding and resources. Implement policies that promote equitable distribution of qualified teachers, up-to-date materials, and technology across schools.

**Financial Support and Scholarships:** Provide financial assistance and scholarships to students from lower-income families to help alleviate the financial barriers associated with education. Establishing programs that cover the costs of textbooks, school supplies, and other necessary materials for students in need.

**Early Intervention and Support:** Implement early intervention programs to identify and address learning challenges at an early stage, providing necessary support for students from all backgrounds. Offer mentoring programs that connect students with positive role models and guidance counselors who can provide academic and personal support.

**Community Engagement and Partnerships:** Engage parents and community members in the educational process, promoting a sense of shared responsibility for students' success.

**Professional Development for Educators:** Provide ongoing professional development for educators on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. One must foster a culture of continuous learning and reflection among teachers and administrators.

**Advocacy and Policy Changes:** Society must advocate for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels that address systemic issues contributing to class-based discrimination in education to cause a catalyst resulting towards creating a more equitable and just education system through policy reforms.

## **CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION**

Cultural discrimination can have a significant impact on academic progression for individuals or groups who experience it. Some of the ways in which cultural discrimination has and will keep on affecting academic advancement are as follows :-

1. **Stereotyping and Bias in Evaluation:** Cultural discrimination can lead to biased evaluations based on stereotypes associated with a particular culture. This may result in lower expectations for academic performance, unfair grading, or inappropriate placement in educational tracks.

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2. **Social and Emotional Impact:** Experiencing cultural discrimination can negatively impact students' mental health, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. This emotional toll may create barriers to learning, concentration, and overall academic engagement.
3. **Barriers to Career Opportunities:** Discrimination based on culture can extend beyond the academic environment, affecting students' ability to access career opportunities. Prejudice in hiring practices or workplace cultures can limit the professional growth of individuals from certain cultural backgrounds.
4. **Cultural Bias in Testing:** Standardized tests may exhibit cultural bias, disadvantaging students from certain cultural backgrounds who may not be familiar with the cultural context embedded in the test questions.
5. **Lack of Representation:** The absence of diverse cultural perspectives in educational materials, curriculum, and faculty can contribute to a sense of exclusion for students from underrepresented cultures. This lack of representation may impact their motivation, engagement, and connection to the academic content.

### **TRANSCENDING CULTURAL BARRIERS FOR EDUCATION**

Transcending discrimination based on culture to improve academic education requires a multifaceted approach that addresses various aspects of the educational system. Here are some strategies that can be implemented to promote inclusivity and equality in education:

1. **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Educators should be trained in culturally responsive teaching practices, which involve recognizing and valuing the cultural backgrounds of students. This includes integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, using inclusive teaching methods, and acknowledging the varied learning styles of students from different cultures.
2. **Diverse and Inclusive Curriculum:** Develop and implement a curriculum that reflects the diversity of cultures, histories, and perspectives. Including materials from different cultural backgrounds helps students see themselves in the content and fosters a sense of belonging.



- 3. Promoting a Positive School Climate:** Create a school environment that fosters inclusion, respect, and appreciation for diversity. This involves addressing and preventing instances of bullying, discrimination, or harassment based on cultural differences.
- 4. Community Involvement:** Engage with parents, families, and community members to create a collaborative educational environment. Involving the community helps ensure that cultural values and perspectives are considered in decision-making processes and educational planning.
- 5. Anti-Bias Education:** Integrate anti-bias education into the curriculum to help students recognize and challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory attitudes. This can empower students to become advocates for inclusivity and equality.
- 6. Equitable Access to Resources:** Ensure that all students have equal access to educational resources, including quality teachers, advanced courses, extracurricular activities, and support services. Addressing resource disparities can help level the playing field for students from different cultural backgrounds.
- 7. Policy Reforms:** Advocate for and implement policies that explicitly address and prohibit discrimination based on culture. Ensure that these policies are consistently enforced and that there are consequences for discriminatory behavior.

In conclusion, the journey towards academic progression and achievement deems it necessary for the transcendence of racial, class, and cultural barriers. By dismantling these obstacles, we pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape. Embracing diversity fosters a rich tapestry of perspectives, encouraging collaboration and understanding among students from varied backgrounds. The commitment to breaking down these barriers is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive intellectually. Ultimately, promoting unity amidst diversity is the key to unlocking the full potential of academic excellence for individuals and society.

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