UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

RACE-BASED DATA IN STUDENT CONDUCT: A CALL TO ACTION

Sarah Elaine Eaton, PhD

June 8, 2020

Acknowledgements

Publication Information

Creative Commons License

Citation (APA)

Eaton, S. E. (2020). Race-Based Data in Student Conduct: A Call to Action. Calgary, Canada: University of
     Calgary.

Abstract

Purpose: This report highlights ways in which race-based data can be used to combat systemic racism in matters relating to academic and non-academic and student misconduct.

Methods: Information synthesis of available information relating to race-based data and student conduct.

Results: A summary and synthesis of how and why race-based data can be used to identify and combat discrimination of students with regards to academic and non-academic misconduct.

Implications: Through this report, an argument is made for more attention to fair and equitable treatment of students in matters relating to academic and non-academic misconduct regardless of race, colour, language or country of origin.

Additional materials: 21 references.

Document type: Report

Keywords: equity, diversity, inclusion, racism, discrimination, student conduct, student affairs, academic integrity, race-based data

Table of Contents

Background

Why Collect Race-Based Data?

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC, 2020) states that collecting and analyzing data on the basis of race and other grounds is acceptable, providing that the purpose of collecting such data are consistent with human rights advocacy such as to:

- Monitor discrimination
- Identify and remove systemic barriers
- Address historical disadvantage
- Promote substantive equality

Race-based data collection must be undertaken with care and should be done when there is cause for concern that systemic barriers exist. Organizations and systems can perpetuate systemic bias when it is reasonable to conclude that those involved should have been aware of the problem, but do little or nothing to identify, understand, or address it (OHRC, 2020).

According to the OHRC (2020), situation that might warrant collection and analysis of race-based data include:

- "Persistent allegations or complaints of discrimination or systemic barriers;
- A widespread public perception of discrimination or systemic barriers;
- Data or research studies demonstrating discrimination or systemic barriers; Observed inequality in the distribution or treatment of racialized persons within an organization; or
- Evidence from other organizations or jurisdictions that a similar policy, program or practice has had a disproportionate effect on racialized persons.
- Data collection should be conducted in good faith with the goal of producing good- quality, accurate and meaningful data, rather than achieving a particular outcome. Accepted data collection techniques and proper research and design methodologies should be used."

Canada not only lags behind other countries in terms of student conduct and academic integrity research (Eaton & Edino, 2018), it also lags behind when it comes to collecting race-based data for educational outcomes (Robson, 2018). "This lack of data has led to a dearth of studies examining the relationship between race and educational outcomes in Canada. Researchers simply do not have the data to analyze" (Robson, 2018, n.p.).

Discrimination in Non-Academic Misconduct Case Management

PHOTO CREDIT: UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

In Canada, there is little race-based data collected about students found responsible of non-academic misconduct. A study from the United States showed found that once other variables had been accounted for, African-American students were 31% more likely to be subjected to disciplinary action for misconduct than their Hispanic or white peers (Fabelo Thompson, & Plotkin, 2011, p. x).

Conversely, white students were less likely to be suspended or expelled for misconduct, and girls were less likely to be removed from school than boys (Fabelo et al., 2011). White girls were more likely to be forgiven or punished less harshly than any other group.

A study in the United found that white girls are more likely to be forgiven or receive less punishment than any other group of students in cases of student non-academic misconduct.

No comparable studies have been done in Canada; nor have similar studies been conducted relating to academic misconduct. As a result, systemic racism likely not only exists in student conduct case management in Canadian educational systems, a persistent lack of effort to identify and address systemic inequities contribute to the problem.

Discrimination in Academic Misconduct Case Management

There is decades of research to show that a high percentage of educators do not report academic misconduct (Bowers, 1964, 1966; McCabe, 1993; Nadelson, 2007; Nuss, 1984; Singhal, 1982; Wright & Kelly, 1974). A large-scale study of 412 faculty members across 17 Canadian universities showed that only about one-third of academic misconduct identified by faculty members are actually reported, with 42% of respondents indicating they prefer to deal with academic misconduct informally without ever reporting it to administrators or decision-makers (MacLeod & Eaton, 2020).

This begs the question: Who actually gets reported for student misconduct?

If the majority of academic misconduct is never reported, that means that the data relating to academic integrity violations is fundamentally flawed because it inaccurately represents actual rates of incidence.

> *With fewer than half of faculty members reporting incidents of academic misconduct, this begs the question: Who actually gets reported for student misconduct?*

OVERREPRESENTATION OF RACIALIZED MINORITIES IN STUDENT CONDUCT CASES

Overrepresentation is a term used in the criminal justice system to refer to an excessive number of individuals from a particular group who are incarcerated relative to their numbers in the overall population (Campbell & Wellman, 2020). For example, there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous persons incarcerated in Canada (Campbell & Wellman, 2020).

With regards to academic integrity, there is growing evidence to show that racialized minorities are overrepresented in reported cases of academic misconduct (Beasley, 2016; Bertram Gallant et al., 2015; Bretag, 2019; Christensen Hughes 2010). This includes those officially classified as international students, those for whom English is an additional language, as well as all students of colour (Christensen Hughes, 2010). International students are at particular risk of being overrepresented in academic misconduct data. One study found that international students are *five times more likely than their domestic counterparts to be reported for academic misconduct* (Beasley, 2016). Moreover, male international students are more likely than female international students to be reported for academic misconduct (Beasley, 2016).

In other words, there is a strong probability that racialized minorities are not engaging in more academic misconduct, but rather that they are reported more often than their white English-as-a-first-language peers. With regards to whether racialized minority students are sanctioned more harshly than their white peers, conclusions cannot be drawn because by and large, institutions do not collect or release such data.

Although there have been robust discussions with regards to social justice and diversity in student affairs (Braxton, 2019; Duong, 2019), part of the problem is that those who report students for misconduct usually do not work in student affairs. Faculty members are the main campus stakeholder group who hold the primary responsibility for reporting student academic misconduct. However, academic staff in higher education are less likely to be trained in ethical workplace behaviour than industry professionals (Kezar,

2011). Similarly, faculty members may be less likely than student affairs professionals to receive implicit bias training. This leads to a perfect storm in which faculty members may be primed to look for academic misconduct more among racialized minorities leading to "disproportionate surveillance and sifting" (Beasley, 2016, p. 57) of international or non-white students, particularly those from whom English is an additional language.

Critical Considerations

Risks of Collecting Race-Based Data

When reporting practices are flawed, there are significant risks in collecting race-based data relating to student conduct because the data can be mis-interpreted or used to foster further systemic discrimination towards particular groups of students. Race-based data must not be used to propagate stereotypes or discrimination. Even when law enforcement agencies collect race-based data, they emphasize that it must be undertaken with a commitment to promoting equity and fairness "to identify, to monitor, and to eliminate potential systemic racism" (Toronto Police Service, 2020).

PHOTO CREDIT: UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Race-based data collection can be undertaken in matters relating to student conduct to:

- Identify reporting bias
- Develop training programs for all campus stakeholders
- Address inequities through policy, procedures and processes designed to uphold human rights and combat discrimination, and
- Implement policy and procedures in ways that are fair, equitable and bias-free

The collection and interpreting of race-based data relating to student conduct must be undertaken with a commitment to eliminating systemic discrimination.

It is imperative that race-based data not be used to propagate stereotypes or foster systemic discrimination.

Conclusion

In Canada little is known about how diverse students are treated with regards to breaches of student conduct. Even if institutions collect and report data about academic or non-academics misconduct, issues relating to race and gender are often neglected. As a result, little substantive or credible data exist to show inequities that might exist in Canada. There is, however, evidence from other countries such as the United States and Australia, to warrant deeper consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion issues, with a view to identifying and addressing systemic discrimination as it relates to student conduct issues.

References

Beasley, E. M. (2016). Comparing the demographics of students reported for academic dishonesty to those of the overall student population. *Ethics & Behavior*, 26(1), 45-62. doi:10.1080/10508422.2014.978977

Bertram Gallant, T., Binkin, N., & Donohue, M. (2015). Students at risk for being reported for cheating. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 13(3), 217-228. doi:10.1007/s10805-015-9235-5

Bowers, W. J. (1964). *Student dishonesty and its control in college*. New York: NY: Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University.

Bowers, W. J. (1966). *Student dishonesty and its control in college*. (Doctor of Philosophy). Columbia University, New York.

Braxton, M. (2019, September 19). 3 Ways to Be Unwaveringly Anti-Racist as a Student Affairs Professional. *Presence*. Retrieved from https://www.presence.io/blog/3-ways-to-be-unwaveringly-anti-racist-as-a-student-affairs-professional/

Bretag, T. (2019). Academic integrity and embracing diversity. Paper presented at the Canadian Symposium on Academic Integrity, Calgary, Canada. http://hdl.handle.net/1880/110278

Campbell, K. M., & Wellman, S. (2020). Addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian Criminal Justice System: Is reconciliation a way forward? In C. Côté-Lussier, D. Moffette, & J. Piché (Eds.), *Contemporary criminological issues: Moving beyond insecurity and exclusion* (pp. 145-164). Ottawa, Canada: University of Ottawa Press.

Christensen Hughes, J. (2010). Academic Integrity Review. Windsor: ON: University of Windsor. Retrieved from http://www.uwindsor.ca/secretariat/sites/uwindsor.ca.secretariat/files/sc110315_-_5.1_-_academic_integrity_review.pdf

Duong, D. (2019, October 16). Does student affairs have a diversity problem? *University Affairs*. Retrieved from https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/does-student-affairs-have-a-diversity-problem/

Eaton, S. E., & Edino, R. I. (2018). Strengthening the research agenda of educational integrity in Canada: A review of the research literature and call to action. *International Journal of Educational Integrity, 14*(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-018-0028-7

Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M. P., & Booth, E. A. (2011). Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement. Retrieved from https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/publications/425

Kezar, A. J., & Sam, C. (2011). Enacting transcendental leadership: Creating and supporting a more ethical campus. In T. Bertram Gallant (Ed.), *Creating the ethical academy: A systems approach to understanding misconduct and empowering change in higher education* (pp. 153-167). New York: Routledge.

MacLeod, P. D., & Eaton, S. E. (2020). The paradox of faculty attitudes toward student violations of academic integrity. Journal of Academic Ethics. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-020-09363-4

McCabe, D. L. (1993). Faculty responses to academic dishonesty: The influence of student honor codes. *Research in Higher Education*, 34(5), 647-658. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40196116

Nadelson, S. (2007). Academic misconduct by university students: Faculty perceptions and responses. Plagiary, 67-76. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.5240451.0002.008

Nuss, E. M. (1984). Academic integrity: Comparing faculty and student attitudes. *Improving College and University Teaching*, 32(3), 140-144. https://doi.org/10.1080/00193089.1984.10533862

Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2020). Racism and racial discrimination: Data collection (fact sheet). Retrieved from http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/racism-and-racial-discrimination-data-collection-fact-sheet

Robson, K. (2018, December 11). Why won't Canada collect data on race and student success? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/why-wont-canada-collect-data-on-race-and-student-success-106689

Singhal, A. C. (1982). Factors in students' dishonesty. *Psychological Reports*, 51(3), 775-780.

Toronto Police Service. (2020). Race-Based Data Collection Strategy. Retrieved from https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/race-based-data/

Wright, J. C., & Kelly, R. (1974). Cheating: Student/faculty views and responsibilities. Improving College and University Teaching, 22(1), 31-34.

For more information contact:

Sarah Elaine Eaton, PhD
Educational Leader in Residence, Academic Integrity
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4
403.220.6378
seaton@ucalgary.ca