DATA EQUITY IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS

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PART 1

Overview of data equity
Definitions

Data Equity

Underscoring marginalized communities’ unequal opportunities to access data and, at times, their harm from data’s misuse, data equity is concerned with consideration, through an equity lens, of the ways in which data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and distributed.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Using metrics, and data to guide strategic decisions that align with goals, objectives, and initiatives. Tied to the ethics of personal data privacy, big data, and decision making that results from the “datafication” of modern society. Used to encompass the complex meanings that data equity captures, and the ways that harmful decision making may be justified or maintained through data.
Data Equity Trends on College Campus

51% of undergraduate students report being in the lowest income quartile

21 out of every 100 low income and first gen students will have attained a bachelor’s degree by 6 years later

Data Source: Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States — 2020 Historical Trend Report
PART 2
Data Equity in Practice: Exercise
Case Study: Race-Based Data

Historically

The Census Bureau collects race data, and these data are based on self-identification.

Pre-COVID

Data show higher rates of negative health outcomes and deaths related to COVID-19 among Black populations.

COVID Pandemic

Collection of race-based data allows for research and calls to action regarding inequitable impact of COVID-19 based on race.

Present

United States

Race-based data collected since 1790, with terms and identifiers changing over time.
## Case Study: Race-Based Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Pre-COVID</th>
<th>COVID Pandemic</th>
<th>Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roots of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism; racially inequitable systems and practices that were established and preserved to present day and the lack of societal recognition of past wrongs</td>
<td>Race-based data is not collected in a routine and/or standard way across Canadian health and clinical databases</td>
<td>Dearth of data on race makes it difficult to monitor health inequities in the Canadian health care system</td>
<td>CIH releases ‘Proposed Standards for Race-Based and Indigenous Identity Data Collection’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
United States

- Advocacy for racial health equity
- Intersectional Approach: ‘Two Pandemics’
- Targeted Interventions by Race
- Increased Accountability: COVID Racial Data Tracker

Canada

- COVID health inequities unknown
- Lack of effective COVID supports for individuals based on race
- Call for standardized collection of race-based data
- Pandemic response not intersectional
PART 3

Creating Data Equity Practices at Universities
Action Towards Data Equity

Conception
• Seek and include communities' interests in design considerations.
• Be aware of how sensitive topics can affect people and communities.
• Consider, 'why am I asking for this data? What will it be used for?'

Outreach & Education
• Share data equity practices with students and staff.
• Create university-wide data equity vision and mission statements, along with strategic plan.
• Include multiple branches of academia to develop data management strategies.
• Seek student feedback on current data equity practices.

Dissemination
• Account for how publication may reinforce inequities or close disparities.
• Share data to reduce the burden of duplicate data collection.
• Return data and research results to community in a form they can use.
• Be transparent about what the plans are for the data.
Action in Data Equity

Analysis
• Seek out and incorporate communities’ interpretation of the data.
• Be transparent about the limits of the data.
• Use analytic methods that appropriately suit the data, without collapsing important variables.
• Be aware of interpretation bias.

Data Collection
• Avoid undue burden.
• Incorporate informed consent whenever possible, even if not formally required.
• Stay up to date on appropriate identifiers, making changes as needed.
• Consort with institutional data leaders to advocate for more equitable categorizations.

Instrumentation
• Be conscientious about re-identification risk.
• Balance minimizing the amount of personally identifiable information (PII) collected with the need for reflective self-identification categories.
Questions to Consider: Data Collection

Why are we seeking to collect data?

Who is empowered to collect data?

What is the dynamic between question asker vs. question answerer?

Who will be the end user of the data?

Who and what will the data be in service to?

Who are the “experts” in the data project?
PART 4

Case Example: Collecting Data Equitably
“Please select one from the three following options”
Barriers of Data Inequity

**Intent**
- Provide identity-specific services to LGBTQ+ populations during COVID
- Engender more inclusive data on COVID impact
- Learn of barriers faced by LGBTQ+ populations during the pandemic

**Consequences**
- Possible need to re-collect data
- Misrepresentation of respondents’ identities
- Discomfort & alienating of respondents, research partners
Influencing Factors

**Conception**
- Led collaboratively by students, faculty & staff

**Data Collection**
- Undue burden limited; intersectionality maximized

**Instrumentation**
- PII limited; identifiers relevant

**Outreach & Collab**
- University-wide data equity mission statements and strategic plan

**Analysis**
- Incorporate communities' interpretation of the data

**Dissemination**
- Be transparent about what the plans are for the data

**Suggested for Universities**

- Led collaboratively by staff and faculty
- Undue burden limited; some intersectionality maximized
- PII limited; some identifiers maximized
- No mission statement or strategic plan on data equity
- Incorporate DEI perspectives in data analysis
- Transparency over data usage and publication
Research Articles

Kaptchuk, ‘Effect of interpretive bias on research evidence’
Inequities in COVID-19 Health Outcomes: The Need for Race- and Ethnicity-Based Data

University-level

Pell Institute - Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the US
American Council of Education - Data Equity & Accountability

Data Equity Definitions & Practices

Urban Institute - Principles for Advancing Equitable Data Practice
JLI Consulting - Data Equity

Other Resources

Education Trust West - Data Equity Walk
US Census - Measuring Race and Ethnicity Across the Decades