

Implications of Race and Racism in Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Critical Analysis

Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are widely used in higher education as a means of assessing faculty performance and informing decisions about promotion, tenure, and compensation. While SETs can provide valuable feedback, they have also been criticized for their potential to perpetuate biases, including those related to race and racism. This article examines the implications of race and racism in SETs, exploring the evidence for bias, the mechanisms through which it operates, and the consequences for faculty of color.



Implications of Race and Racism in Student Evaluations of Teaching: The Hate U Give (Race and Education in the Twenty-First Century) by P. C. Doherty

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Evidence of Bias

A growing body of research has documented evidence of racial bias in SETs. Studies have found that:

- Students are more likely to give lower evaluations to faculty of color compared to white faculty, even when controlling for factors such as course content and teaching quality.
- Faculty of color are more likely to receive negative comments related to their race or ethnicity in SETs.
- The bias is particularly pronounced in fields where students are more likely to hold stereotypes about faculty of color, such as STEM and business.

Mechanisms of Bias

The mechanisms through which racial bias operates in SETs are complex and multifaceted. Some of the contributing factors include:

- **Implicit bias:** Students may hold unconscious biases about faculty of color based on their race or ethnicity, which can influence their evaluations.
- **Confirmation bias:** Students who have preconceived notions about faculty of color may seek out information that confirms their beliefs, leading to biased evaluations.
- **Stereotypes:** Students may rely on stereotypes about faculty of color, such as the "angry Black woman" or the "passive Asian," which can negatively affect their evaluations.
- **Power dynamics:** Faculty of color often face power imbalances in the classroom, which can make students more reluctant to criticize white faculty members.

Consequences for Faculty of Color

The racial bias in SETs has significant consequences for faculty of color. Lower evaluations can lead to:

- **Denial of promotion and tenure:** SETs are often used as a primary indicator of teaching effectiveness in promotion and tenure decisions, so biased evaluations can have career-limiting effects.
- **Lower salaries:** SETs are also used to determine faculty compensation, so biased evaluations can result in lower salaries for faculty of color.
- **Diminished morale:** Faculty of color who experience racial bias in SETs may feel undervalued and demoralized, which can negatively impact their teaching and research.

Implications for Higher Education

The implications of racial bias in SETs are far-reaching for higher education. Bias in SETs:

- **Undermines diversity:** By disadvantaging faculty of color, biased SETs create an unwelcoming environment for underrepresented groups in academia.
- **Perpetuates inequity:** Biased SETs contribute to the systemic inequities that exist in higher education for faculty of color.
- **Damages the reputation of institutions:** Institutions that tolerate biased SETs risk damaging their reputation for equity and inclusion.

Addressing Bias

Addressing racial bias in SETs is essential for creating a more equitable and just higher education system. Some strategies to address bias include:

- **Training for students:** Students should be provided with training to identify and mitigate implicit bias in their evaluations.
- **Anonymous evaluations:** Removing student names from SETs can help reduce the influence of implicit bias on evaluations.
- **Multiple measures of teaching effectiveness:** Institutions should rely on a variety of measures of teaching effectiveness, beyond SETs, to reduce the impact of bias.
- **Support for faculty of color:** Institutions should provide support and mentorship to faculty of color who experience racial bias in SETs.

Racial bias in student evaluations of teaching is a serious problem with significant consequences for faculty of color and the higher education system as a whole. By understanding the mechanisms of bias and implementing strategies to address it, institutions can create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all.

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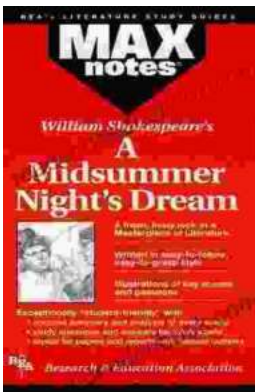
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