

EDITORIAL

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New priorities for academic integrity: equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and Indigenization

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Abstract

The topics of equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization have been neglected in academic and research integrity. In this article, I offer examples of how these issues are being addressed and argue that academic integrity networks and organizations ought to develop intentional strategies for equity, diversity and inclusion, and decolonization in terms of leadership, scholarship, and professional opportunities. I point out that existing systems perpetuate the conditions that allow for overrepresentation of reporting among particular student groups including international students, students of colour, and those for whom English is an additional language. I conclude with concrete recommendations for action.

Keywords: Academic integrity, Academic misconduct, Academic dishonesty, Research integrity, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Decolonization, Indigenization, Allyship fairness

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as the inaugural Educational Leader in Residence, Academic Integrity at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary. As I wrap up this three-year secondment, I am also sad because there is so much work still to do. When I took on the role, one of the challenges that was posed to me by our senior leadership was to think about how to connect academic integrity to our university's strategic priorities. Three institutional priorities came to the foreground: our Campus Mental Health Strategy (University of Calgary 2015); the Indigenous Strategy (University of Calgary 2019), and our university's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI). I committed to deepening my own understanding of these three areas: mental health; Indigenous knowledge; and equity, diversity and inclusion, as they relate to academic integrity.

There has been a fair amount written about the connections between mental health, stress, and academic integrity going back many decades. Often, stress has been discussed as one of the contributing factors that can lead to academic misconduct (e.g., McCabe 1992; McCabe and Treviño 1993) and how mental health can impact



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students' overall academic performance (e.g., Blum 2016). However, EDI – along with decolonization and Indigenization – have been neglected in much of the academic integrity literature. Although we have made some progress, there is still more work to be done; and so, I focus this editorial on these topics.

As I explain later in this editorial, I use the term “Indigenous” here because that is the language we use in my home country of Canada. I recognize that the nomenclature differs in other places, with “Aboriginal” being favoured in Australia and New Zealand, as one example. I acknowledge and appreciate that there is no singular monolithic Indigenous culture and that Indigenous peoples have rich and varied histories, languages, and cultures.

I also use the term “equity-deserving” in this editorial to signal my commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism (see Smith 2020). I recognize that Indigenous peoples are included among those from equity-deserving groups, and that the topic of equity is deep and complex, with tensions and disagreements among those who work in these areas. I do not delve into these complexities here, but I acknowledge that they are worthy of thoughtful consideration, and that some tensions remain unresolved. In this article I focus specifically on equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and Indigenization of academic integrity, because I remain convinced that these broad but inter-related topics have received far too little attention in our institutional processes and systems, our scholarship, and even in our conversations. I recognize that my privilege as a white scholar of British descent also brings with it responsibilities for allyship and advocacy.

Beginning my own journey as an ally

When an acquisitions editor at ABC-CLIO reached to me to write a book on academic integrity, I accepted the offer and developed the book proposal for *Plagiarism in Higher Education: Tackling Tough Topics in Academic Integrity* (Eaton 2021b). In the early stages of the writing, I envisioned a chapter about international students. As I developed the book, I shifted my focus and instead, chapter nine became about diversity, equity, and inclusion. I wanted to expand the conversation beyond what had already been discussed in the literature and bring forward new ideas for consideration. I wrote about bias and racial profiling in academic misconduct reporting, the role of culture, and considerations for decolonizing and Indigenizing academic integrity. That chapter, in particular, challenged me to deepen my own understandings of these topics and also reminded me of the importance to remain humble as a scholar and be constantly aware of the limitations of one's own knowledge. In the chapter I cite various Indigenous writers including Louie (2019, 2020), Louie et al. (2017), Maracle (2020), and Younging (2018). I was beginning to educate myself about foundational concepts related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as decolonization and Indigenization.

I submitted the book manuscript to the publisher in the summer of 2020, a few weeks after George Floyd's murder in the city of Minneapolis, USA. That event, and others that followed, sparked “a racial reckoning” (Smith 2021). As a result, people the world over began to (re)consider racism, discrimination, and equity in new ways. When the book went into production in the fall of that year, I recall that I had challenging conversations with the production editors, who initially changed all instances of “Indigenous” in the manuscript to start with a lower case “i”, so it complied with the style

guide used by the publisher. I was even more of a neophyte than about decolonization 2 years ago, but I knew that capitalizing the word “Indigenous” was a small, but important signal of allyship, so I insisted that it be capitalized throughout. I also pushed back on the suggestion that perhaps “Indigenous” could be changed to “Native American”. I gently but firmly rejected this, explaining that as a Canadian, we use the term “Indigenous” and it would be unethical for me to change this wording, even though that’s what might be used by an American publisher or better understood by readers in the United States.

Of all the negotiations I anticipated having with the book publisher, these were not among them. Let me be clear that in general I had a good experience working with the team at ABC-CLIO and felt particularly supported by Jessica Gribble, the Senior Acquisitions Editor with whom I worked most closely. However, negotiating with the production team as the manuscript was being prepared for publication made me realize the importance of social justice in all aspects of our scholarship, including editorial decisions. In the end, the publisher agreed to allow me to keep the word “Indigenous” and allowed it to be capitalized and I was grateful. I did not realize until later that these negotiations with the publisher were my initiation into allyship.

The Indigenous academic integrity project at the University of Calgary

Following those negotiations, I committed to deepening my understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and Indigenization of academic integrity. I knew that there was much more work to be done. With regards to Indigenization, I knew that I was not the person to lead that work. The student resource created by Iehntonkwias (Bonnie Jane) Maracle at the University of Toronto (Maracle 2020) inspired me to hire a student at the University of Calgary to help us advance our institutional understandings of what it means to decolonize and Indigenize academic integrity.

In the summer of 2020, I had the privilege of meeting and hiring Keeta Gladue, a Cree and Métis graduate student and Indigenous student program advisor at the University of Calgary. I have said on various occasions that Keeta “breaks your brain in the most beautiful ways”. When we first met, I presented Keeta with a copy of the Seven Grandfathers in Academic Integrity resource (Maracle 2020) that had been developed for use at the University of Toronto and asked her if she could do something similar for the University of Calgary. She smiled warmly – said, “No.” That was the beginning of a relationship for which I will be eternally grateful. We began to talk about the work she could undertake to help advance our understanding of academic integrity at our university and the result was beyond my wildest dreams. Keeta not only produced an open access written guide (Gladue 2020a), but she also produced a multimedia presentation that she presented as a webinar on November 13, 2020. Keeta wanted to express her ideas about academic integrity through story and oral teachings; it was my role to support her.

Of all the webinars that were included in our Academic Integrity: Urgent and Emerging Topics series at the Taylor Institute of Teaching and Learning, Keeta’s was by far the most popular. We exceeded the maximum capacity of 300 people for the webinar and people wrote to us, asking to be placed on waiting list, begging to be included if possible. The reality was that we were not prepared for the amount of interest in the webinar and it took us by surprise. The webinar recording (Gladue 2020b) remains

publicly available for anyone who wants to watch it – and I highly recommend it for anyone who is interested in how to decolonize and Indigenize academic integrity.

One of the key takeaways I have learned from Keeta is that “Indigenization can only be done by Indigenous people” (Gladue 2020b, timestamp 35:03), but “decolonization is the work of all people” (Gladue 2020b, timestamp 35:26). Keeta goes on to explain the differences between Indigenization and decolonization through simple, yet compelling words.

Another key point Keeta makes in her work is how the Indigenous principles of Relationality, Reciprocity, and Respect serve as *parallel ways of knowing that complement, rather than compete with existing frameworks* (Gladue 2020a, b) such as the Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity (International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) 2021). The notion of assimilation is antithetical to that of decolonization. If we are going to truly commit to equity in academic integrity, we must not only accept other ways of knowing, being, and doing, we must embrace them. There is not one single, universal concept of academic integrity, but rather multiple and complementary systems of ethical practice in teaching, learning, and sharing knowledge. The plurality of perspectives of what it means to act and think with integrity is a fundamental concept of ethical educational practice and leadership.

I will remain forever grateful to Keeta for the many things I have learned from her. I continue to return to the resources she created (both written and multimedia) and learn something new every time.

Extending the conversation in Canada

Since launching the Indigenous Academic Integrity project at the University of Calgary, we have continued the conversation in Canada. As Julia Christensen Hughes and I were conceptualizing our edited volume, *Academic Integrity in Canada: An Enduring and Essential Challenge* (Eaton & Christensen Hughes 2022), we knew that we must include chapters from Indigenous authors. Keeta Gladue partnered with Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt to write “Re-defining academic integrity: Embracing Indigenous truths” (Poitras Pratt and Gladue 2022), a chapter in which they delve into the importance of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012, 2015), relating the importance of this work to ethics and integrity in education. They propose that we re-define “academic integrity through Indigenous values and traditions” (p. 116). They emphasize that Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing do not compete with existing frameworks or approaches, but instead complement them.

In another chapter, Dr. Gabrielle Lindstrom, extends the conversation by challenging the ways in which “academic integrity is advanced as a Western construct” (p. 125). She considers the importance of Indigenous educational sovereignty noting that, “the notion of accountability underpins educational sovereignty which in turn can offer an alternative vision of academic integrity” (p. 133). Additionally, Lindstrom (2022) critiques “academic integrity and ongoing colonization” (p. 133), challenging those of us (myself included) from dominant academic cultures to re-examine the ways in which we perpetuate colonialism through our academic integrity practices and research.

In addition to these two chapters, I would also like to highlight the work done by Lorisia MacLeod (2021) of the James Smith Cree Nation. Her work on how to cite and reference Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers is helpful and empowering.

MacLeod's work is practical and helpful for students and scholars alike. She provides concrete advice on how to acknowledge and respect Indigenous knowledge through citing and referencing practices that complement existing style guides and referencing manuals.

As I was reading these works, it occurred to me that this is only the beginning of an important dialogue. Adding the voices of Indigenous peoples from other regions of Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries (including those where English is not the dominant language) is essential for advancing our understanding of what it means to act with integrity in schools and other educational contexts.

Anecdotal observations from beyond Canada

One of the aspects of academic integrity research that I have noted is that the field has been dominated by white scholars, mainly of Anglo backgrounds. In a recent introduction to a special journal issue on academic integrity, Bertram Gallant and Rettinger (2022) highlight the contributions of three early foundational scholars of academic integrity, all of whom were white men. The field of academic integrity research remains dominated by white scholars of European heritage across the United States, Canada, Australia, the UK, and other European countries; however, excellent high quality academic integrity research has been conducted or led by people from outside this dominant social group. For just a few examples see Khan 2017; Khan et al. 2020; Parnter 2015; Parnter and Eaton 2021; Sivasubramaniam et al. 2021a, Sivasubramaniam et al. 2021b. There are many more examples that not only merit more attention, but also more intentional inclusion in scholarship, reading lists, and teachings about academic integrity.

One anecdotal observation I have is that academic integrity researchers in Europe and specifically those from the European Network of Academic Integrity (ENAI) have set an example for the rest of the world to follow in terms of actively including scholars from non-European heritage in leadership roles, research projects, knowledge mobilization, and working groups. There is absolutely a role for regional, national, and international academic integrity bodies to play in elevating and amplifying the work of diverse professionals and scholars in the field. Members of ENAI demonstrate how they value plurality and diversity through genuine and sustained efforts across multiple projects over time. In my humble opinion, ENAI's inclusive and equitable practices are unparalleled by any other academic integrity body at the current time and stand as an exemplar for other bodies to follow (including the one I co-founded and continue to serve in my home province of Alberta, Canada). There is an opportunity for other academic integrity networks and organizations to develop intentional strategies for equity, diversity and inclusion, and decolonization in terms of leadership, scholarship, and professional opportunities.

A call to action: advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization as academic integrity priorities

Knowing that we need practical and concrete actions to show our commitment to equity and decolonization, I offer the following ten recommendations. I deliberately use bullet points instead of a numbering system, to avoid the suggestion of a hierarchy.

None of these suggestions is more or less important than any other. Moreover, these represent a starting point for action, not an exhaustive checklist. The work of allies and activists is never done; and it is important to resist the temptation to view the work as ever being finished. A commitment to allyship is a life's work, demonstrated throughout our daily ethical practice as educators, leaders, researchers, and human beings.

Educate yourself

Equity advocates write extensively about how it is not their job to educate those from dominant (and predominantly white) social groups. It is up to those from dominant groups to take responsibility for building our own understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization. The sources I have included in the reference list of this article also serve as a point of departure for further reading. In addition to sources already cited, I also recommend reading "Indigenization and Decolonization in Canadian Student Affairs" (Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) 2018), an edited issue with numerous contributions by various authors. For those in the United States, Poon's (2018) article, "Ending white innocence in student affairs and higher education" is an enlightening read. Of course, there are also mainstream books on equity and anti-racism worthy of mention, including those by DiAngelo (2018) and Kendi (2019).

In addition to our own individual efforts to educate ourselves, learning in community with one another is also important. Informal networks, such as academic integrity communities of practice, reading circles, writing groups, task forces, and working groups, provide fertile ground for learning about equity with and from one another.

Become an academic integrity ally and activist

Academic work is advocacy work. Every day we are called upon to make ethical decisions in our daily lives and professional practices. We must take every opportunity to advocate for equity, in practice and in principle.

As I learned from Keeta Gladue's teachings, if the system is invisible to you, that is because it was created for you. Keeta explains that those who experience systemic discrimination more easily recognize systems (including educational systems) that create barriers to their success. Those who are in positions of privilege rarely recognize their privilege until they make a concerted effort to do so. When we engage in academic integrity work as an advocate and an ally, we can begin to identify the ways in which the systems are part of (and in some cases, help to create or sustain) create barriers for others. It is incumbent upon those of us who work in academic integrity and student conduct to advocate for change from within the systems in which we are embedded.

Work to dismantle systemic barriers to success

Identifying and challenging systemic barriers to student success should be fundamental to academic integrity work. This includes identifying and working to rectify systems that allow for overrepresentation of reporting among particular student groups including international students, students of colour, and those for whom English is an additional language (Bretag 2019; Eaton 2021a, b). Promoting academic integrity is about

more than upholding rules and policies, especially when they perpetuate systems of privilege for some and oppression for others.

Promoting alternative resolutions to academic misconduct, particularly those with a restorative focus, present real and practical possibilities to think differently about how we handle breaches of integrity and, in doing so, support students in their learning. For additional reading on restorative resolutions to breaches of student conduct, I recommend the work of Paul Sopcak (Sopcak 2020; Sopcak and Hood 2022), along with Kara and MacAlister (2010) and Moriarty and Wilson (2022).

Elevate and amplify the work of individuals from equity-deserving groups

We must take every opportunity to elevate and amplify contributions from individuals from equity-deserving groups as part of our professional practice and scholarship. One concrete way to do this in academic integrity presentations, workshops, and publications, is to review the reference lists of our own work to ensure we are citing and referencing the work of individuals from equity-deserving groups, including but not limited to Indigenous, Black, and LatinX persons. It is not enough to rely on the works of historically influential white scholars, claiming their work is superior because it is the most highly cited. Instead, it is incumbent upon all of us to read, cite, and celebrate the contributions of experts and researchers from all backgrounds, and to pay special attention to those whose works have previously been disregarded or dismissed because they are not from dominant white (and largely Anglo) backgrounds.

In our social media activity, it is also appropriate to celebrate and amplify the voices of those working in academic integrity and students services who are from equity-deserving groups – and to do so regularly and often.

Create meaningful opportunities for individuals from equity-deserving groups

When doing academic and research integrity work, we must lead by example, and this includes demonstrating our commitment to equity not only through our words, but also through actions. It is essential for those who enjoy positions of privilege to actively work to create meaningful opportunities for others. This includes, but is not limited to inviting people from equity-deserving groups to serve in positions of senior leadership in our institutions, our academic integrity offices, our policy development teams, editorial boards, and graduate student examination and supervision committees. At our academic integrity and research integrity conferences, it is important to lead by example with regards to equity by inviting keynote and plenary speakers who are not white and/or for whom English is not a first language.

Invite those from equity-deserving groups to the table

Creating opportunities includes inviting those from equity-deserving groups into collaborative projects as full and equal partners in the work. It is important to ensure we are “inviting everyone in” (Plaut 2014, p. 52). It has been shown over and over again that those from equity-deserving groups contribute in creative and innovative ways when they are invited to the table, and their contributions are respected and valued (Phillips 2014).

Those in positions of privilege must be attentive to the power they hold in terms of who gets invited to contribute and collaborate and how. For our academic integrity communities, it is appropriate for those from equity-deserving groups to be invited to join as full partners in the work of practice, policy, leadership, research, education, professional development, and advocacy.

Resist norms of citing, reference and writing styles that perpetuate colonialism

When I challenged the editorial norms of the publisher I worked with for my book (Eaton 2021a, b) in terms of capitalizing the word “Indigenous”, it was an act of resistance against mainstream publishing style guides and standards that perpetuate colonial norms. It is important to update our understandings of capitalization not only as a matter of grammar or style, but also as an act of advocacy and allyship. Small details in language matter and challenging outdated norms regarding capitalization is merely one example of how to update our approaches to writing, citing, and referencing so they are more ethical and equitable. We must take every opportunity to understand how existing practices of writing, citing, and referencing perpetuate colonialism – and then work to remedy these outdated practices whenever and however we can.

Lorisia MacLeod (2021) has created templates for citing and referencing Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers that, in my opinion, should be taught to students everywhere. One important point MacLeod makes is that it is not enough to cite Indigenous knowledge (and particularly oral teachings) as personal communication, as dominant style guides say we should. Instead, we must actively seek ways to acknowledge traditional knowledge systems in ways that fearlessly challenge “the mechanisms through which Indigenous knowledges [have] been excluded and consider new processes that are more respectful and inclusive” (MacLeod 2021, n.p.).

Resist taking ownership

When I brought in Keeta Gladue to undertake the Indigenous Academic Integrity project at the University of Calgary, we agreed that she would be the author of the work. We had many conversations about how work is developed in community with others and we agreed that she would include acknowledgements at the end to recognize others who supported and provided feedback on the work. The ethics of authorship is not the focus of this article, but suffice to say that it is imperative that individuals who are in supervisory roles resist historical norms of taking sole or lead authorship for work created by others.

Equally important is the responsibility of the institution not to subsume the work of those from equity-deserving groups under the umbrella of organizational ownership that fails to name or acknowledge individual authors of the work. Works may be published by institutions, but they are developed and written by individuals. It is essential that institutions do not claim ownership of works created by individuals or teams of people, especially when those people are Indigenous or from other equity-deserving groups. Just because one is an employee and their contributions may be considered “work for hire” under institutional policies, it is important to push back against norms

in which institutions can claim authorship and ownership of the human beings who spent time and effort to develop and create materials and content.

Revise policy and practice documents with an equity focus

As Mary Davis (2022) pointed out in a recent conference presentation, there is much work to be done to ensure that we attend to equity issues in our institutional academic integrity policy and practice documents. Davis pointed how the language of academic integrity policies, procedures, and educational materials is often inaccessible and overly complicated. She offers practical advice, such as applying principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to academic integrity materials (a sensible suggestion if there ever was one).

Make equity, diversity, inclusion decolonization and Indigenization an academic integrity imperative

More than a decade ago, Tricia Bertram Gallant urged us to reconsider academic integrity as a teaching and learning imperative (Bertram Gallant 2008). I agree with her entirely and continue to promote this approach in my own practice and scholarship. I acknowledge though, that our world has changed dramatically in recent years. As someone who lives and works in Canada, coming to understand the horrors of Residential Schools on First Nations children (see Poitras Pratt and Gladue 2022), including the discovery of thousands of unmarked graves of Indigenous children found on the grounds of these schools across the country has led me to contemplate ethics in educational contexts in ways I never previously imagined.

In addition to teaching and learning approaches, the time has come to prioritize equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and Indigenization as academic integrity imperatives. I am not suggesting that we dismiss the teaching and learning imperatives that Bertram Gallant (2008) and others (e.g., Bretag et al. 2019; McNeill 2022; Morris 2016) have called for. Instead, I am suggesting that we add new priorities to ensure that we are supporting our students, our colleagues, and our institutions with updated approaches that are responsive to the current state of the world and our understandings of it. This is not an either/or situation; it is not a competition between previous and proposed priorities. Instead, I am advocating for layering on additional and important considerations for academic integrity that urgently need our attention.

Conclusions and future directions

As I draw this article to a close, I acknowledge some limitations of this editorial and summarize key ideas.

Limitations and delimitations

In this editorial, I have chosen to highlight examples mainly from my home country of Canada. However, I would be remiss not to acknowledge that equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization are issues worldwide. In particular, decolonization is about the ways in which colonialism has impacted “settler colonial nation-states” (Tuck and Yang 2012, p. 2). In other words, these are not Canadian issues, they are global ones. Academic integrity professionals and scholars are inherently

concerned with ethics in educational contexts and as such, it is imperative for us to recognize the importance of decolonizing academic integrity in practice, policy, and research.

I also need to recognize that I continue to learn about these important issues myself. There is literature I have yet to read (and cite) and ideas I have yet to process. As such, I accept responsibility for any errors, omissions, or oversights in this work.

Conclusions and next steps

I can sum up this article with three simple, clear points. First, there can be no integrity without equity. Second, it is the responsibility of people who work in academic integrity to advocate for equity in academic integrity, including its decolonization – no one else is going to do it for us. Last but not least, it is essential to include those from equity-deserving groups in senior leadership roles in our academic integrity networks and organizations, in our research and publications, and in our institutional units and offices with primary responsibility for upholding ethics and integrity.

Lee Adam (2016) wrote three dominant approaches to plagiarism (and by extension, academic integrity broadly): a moral issue, a policy or regulatory issue, and a teaching and learning issue. I propose that we layer on a fourth approach that has equity as its focus. These multiple, overlapping and intersecting approaches could be visualized like this:

In Fig. 1, I have symbolically prioritized equity and advocacy at the top. This is because it is a new priority that deserves heightened attention. The remaining three serve as foundations upon which academic integrity work continues to develop.

Of course, all of this work does not happen for free and it is unreasonable to expect that the advancement of equity in academic integrity should happen off the side of one's desk or be lumped into existing job descriptions as additional service work. I have written elsewhere (Eaton 2021b) about how academic integrity work is invisible and

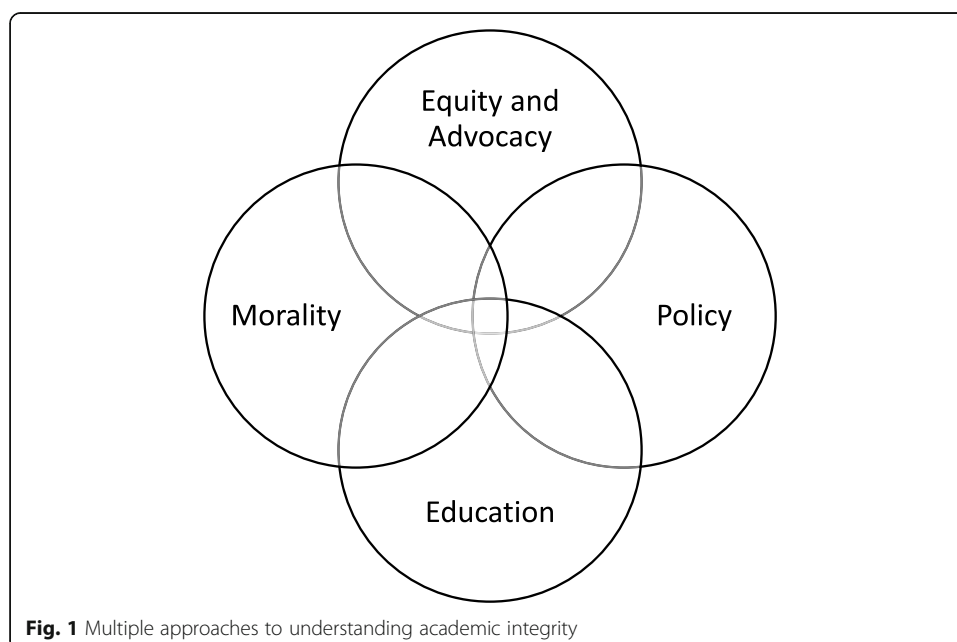


Fig. 1 Multiple approaches to understanding academic integrity

undervalued. Institutions show what they value by what they fund. If educational institutions genuinely want to commit to academic integrity and to equity, then it is essential that resources be allocated to do the work. Specifically, there must be sufficient time, adequate staffing levels, and professional-level job classifications (with commensurate salaries) for academic integrity work.

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Author's contributions

This is a sole-authored article. As such, I am 100% responsible for the content herein, including any errors or omissions. The author(s) read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials

All materials used in the preparation of this article are cited in the reference list.

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Competing interests

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