**Toronto Metropolitan University** | **Ted Rogers School of Management**

# Dimensions
## Pilot Program

# TRSM FACULTY DIMENSIONS REPORT

# 2021-2022

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# ABOUT THE TRSM DIMENSIONS TEAM

The TRSM Dimension team is chaired by Dr. Rupa Banerjee, Canada Research Chair in the Economic inclusion, Employment and Entrepreneurship of Canada's Immigrants and Associate Professor of Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour.  The TRSM Dimensions student team consists of MScM student Talia Emanuel, and undergraduate student Cindy Chen.  In the 2021-2022 academic year, the TRSM Dimensions team has undertaken the following activities:

- worked with the university-wide Dimensions team to design and implement faculty and librarian surveys
- compiled data on EDI related research interests among TRSM faculty members
- helped to redesign TRSM faculty research funding program to include EDI considerations in proposals
- presented recommendations to SRC committee to apply a critical EDI lens in evaluation of research funding applications
- designed and delivered workshops on equity, diversity and inclusion in research for graduate students and undergraduate students.
- conducted interviews with faculty members to gather qualitative data on barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion in academic research

In this report, we summarize the key activities undertaken by the TRSM Dimensions team during the 2021-2022 academic year and discuss the main findings from these activities.

# EDI-RELATED RESEARCH AMONG TRSM FACULTY MEMBERS

In order to understand the level of engagement in EDI issues among TRSM faculty members, the Dimensions team compiled a list of faculty members' research areas that connect with equity, diversity and inclusion.  Using publicly available faculty websites and CVs, we analyzed the research interests and publications of 139 TRSM researchers and found that 17 individuals engaged in research related to EDI issues.  The most commonly studied EDI area in TRSM was gender, with researchers exploring themes such as gender diversity in sports, consumer behaviour and leadership.  Other EDI-related research areas included immigrant entrepreneurship, immigrant employment in the tourism sector, racialization in the labour market, age discrimination, barriers to banking for Indigenous communities, and discrimination against LGBTQ2S+ workers.  Several researchers also engaged in research related to business ethics, corporate social responsibility, bias in the hiring process and perceptions of equity and justice within organizations.

Based on our analysis, just over 12% of TRSM faculty members indicated research interests related to equity, diversity and inclusion in their faculty profiles.

# EDI CONSIDERATIONS IN TRSM FACULTY RESEARCH FUNDING

In January 2022, the TRSM Dimensions Faculty Chair (DFC) worked with the Associate Dean of Research to develop EDI-related criteria for faculty research funding applications.  Based on tri-council guidelines, the request for funding proposals added in the following to call for proposals:

Integrating principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into all aspects of research, including research design, team composition and dissemination, provides better outcomes.  EDI principles promote rigorous research that take into account aspects of identity so that the results are relevant to Canada's diverse population. EDI in research goes beyond research projects or topics with specific EDI components. It can apply to any area of research. EDI considerations in research can be categorized into two broad areas: (1) research design; and (2) research team and research environment. Within each of these broad areas, please use the following questions as a guide to comment on how you will ensure EDI in your research.

*Research design:*

- *How will your research questions and the subsequent findings from your study apply to the needs or experiences of various groups in society?*
- *If you are collecting data, how will you ensure that research participants are representative of society?  If you are focusing on one or more specific sub-group(s), indicate why this is important.*
- *Have you included a mechanism to disaggregate your data by diversity-related variables both during data collection and data analysis? If not, indicate why this is not required or possible.*

- *Research team and research environment:*
- *How will you ensure that your research team is diverse?  What recruitment processes will you employ for trainees (students, and highly qualified personnel) to ensure diversity and inclusion?*
- *How will you create an equitable, inclusive and accessible research work environment for trainees and team members? Please be as specific as possible.*

# PRESENTATION TO SRC COMMITTEE

In February 2022, the TRSM DFC presented recommendations to the SRC committee for revising the faculty research grant application to include EDI considerations in the adjudication process.  Overall, there was agreement from the SRC committee that EDI factors are important in research grants.  However, there were several concerns and questions.  Specifically, committee members had the following concerns/questions:

- How will "EDI statements" be evaluated during the grant adjudication process?  Will it be pass/fail? Will the statement itself be scrutinized and used as a basis for accepting/rejecting applications?
- How do we prevent the EDI statement from becoming a performative exercise that simply serves as a checkbox? On the other hand, how do we ensure that research funding is awarded based on the merit of the proposal rather than EDI considerations?
- What about researchers who do not conduct research that aligns with EDI?  For example, if a researcher conducts theoretical analyses that do not have empirical components, how would EDI be incorporated into such research designs?

In response to these questions and concerns, the DFC engaged in a discussion of the crucial role of EDI in high quality, impactful research, and provided tips on how EDI considerations can be included in research even if they are not on EDI-adjacent topics or empirical in design.  The SRC committee voted to include the recommended EDI requirements in the 2022-2023 faculty research funding call for proposals.

# GRADUATE STUDENT DIMENSIONS WORKSHOPS

On March 17th, 2022 the TRSM Dimensions team delivered a workshop for research focused masters (MScM) students.  All first year MScM students participated in this workshop since it was incorporated into the required course for these students.  Based on the feedback received in the previous year's workshop, we made this session compulsory and provided it within the first year of the master's curriculum. The student members of the TRSM Dimensions team, and the graduate student representative in particular, took the lead in running this workshop.  The focus of the workshop was threefold: (1) introduce principles of EDI in research; (2) introduce the Dimensions Pilot Project; (3) highlight strategies for integrating EDI into grant and job applications.  In addition to providing practical strategies for understanding and integrating EDI into research, the workshop provided a step-by-step guide for developing an EDI statement.  We also discussed "do's and don'ts" of EDI statements.  The workshop used the Mentimeter app to infuse interactivity into the presentation and also included an experiential activity which required participants to apply the concepts in an interview role-play.  There were a number of interview questions used in the role-play such as:

You are working with a research team which employs several masters students. As part of a grant application, your team is required to show how you address Equity Diversity and Inclusion in your lab activities. The two masters students working on the grant application approach you and say,

"We don't understand why we need to address EDI in this grant—shouldn't we just focus on our research activities?"

This role-play activity allowed participants to articulate their EDI philosophies and experiences.  Most students found this challenging but insightful.  The students were highly receptive to the workshop and indicated an interest in following up with other EDI related training in the future.

On March 29th, the DFC presented a similar workshop for all PhD students within the required doctoral seminar.  All first- and second-year PhD students were required to attend this workshop.  While the objectives were similar to the workshop delivered to MScM students, the main difference was a stronger focus on strategies to incorporate EDI into academic research design and implementation.  The workshop utilized large group discussion to engage participants in critical thinking.  The feedback from this workshop was overwhelmingly positive.  Students discussed their own struggles with systemic barriers and discrimination in their professional lives (most participants were mature students with work experience prior to their doctoral studies).

# UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT DIMENSIONS WORKSHOP

On May 20th 2022 the TRSM Dimensions team presented a workshop for research oriented undergraduate students at TRSM.  This workshop was mandatory for students who received a summer undergraduate research assistantship award. The workshop was also integrated into an undergraduate research methods course, with about 10 registrants.

The main objective was to introduce concepts related to EDI and highlight ways to include EDI principles into job and graduate school applications and well as scholarship applications. The workshop utilized the "Flower Power" exercise to initiate a discussion of power and privilege in society and how aspects of identity intersect to influence experiences of oppression.  This exercise generated a fruitful discussion of students' experiences with discrimination and lack of access to resources in their educational journey. In addition to providing terms and definitions, practical strategies for articulating EDI philosophies and experiences were introduced.  Finally, the workshop included an experiential activity to help the students apply the concepts in a realistic scenario.  For the experiential exercise, the students were provided with a research-oriented job description and asked the following question:

> ► This position requires you to collect baseline data. How would your commitment to EDI impact the way you collect and analyze data? Why is diversity in research important?

The students were extremely engaged and insightful in brainstorming how EDI principles can be incorporated into data collection and analysis.  They had a strong sense of the importance of EDI in ensuring that research findings are representative of society.  The students also discussed the connection between EDI and ethical research practices.

# FACULTY INTERVIEWS

Between October 2021 and May 2022, the TRSM DFC conducted 14 interviews with faculty members to gather data on EDI barriers, experiences, and recommendations.  Although all faculty members were invited to take part, those who agreed to participate all identified as members of at least one equity-deserving group.  The interviewees varied significantly in terms of seniority with both pre- and post-tenure faculty members participating.  The disciplinary backgrounds of the interviewees also varied greatly, and included areas such as marketing, information technology management, human resource management, global management studies, and law and business. The key insights gleaned from these interviews are:

1. Many interviewees reported feeling pressured early in their research careers (as graduate students) to fit a particular mold to be accepted into the academic community.  As one participant stated: "…the importance of impression management was made very clear from the beginning".  For some this included advice on how to dress appropriately to be "taken seriously".  For others, it was advice on how to co-author with senior academics in order to publish papers.  Several interviewees discussed the exploitative nature of these relationships, with junior academics expected to carry the burden of the work, while the reputation of the senior scholar conferred them with power and privilege.  In almost all cases the senior scholars were white men, so intersecting aspects of socio-demographic identity played an important role in the unequal balance of power within these relationships.

2. Nearly all interviewees discussed the "publishing game", and how bias is integrated into the system.  Research tends to be very US centric, with most of the top business journals based in the US.  Therefore, data and analyses from other places, and in

particular from the Global South is often seen as inferior and is less likely to be published in high level journals. This leads to the perpetuation of inequality.  One participant recounted comments received from a fellow reviewer when serving as a peer reviewer for a journal: "I was second reviewer and the first reviewer indicated that the author(s) should "leave their Korean habits" and learn to write English properly.  The reviewer went on to say that "this is not a Korean journal" and you should meet the standards of an international journal".  Similarly, several interviewees discussed the importance of choosing "publishable" research topics.  Mid- to late- career researchers reported that in the past, topics that had a connection to EDI were not seen as publishable.  Interviewees felt that this has changed over time such that EDI is now considered a "hot topic" in the business literature.  However, despite this shift in attitude, fundamental inequities remain.  For example, demographic characteristics are often measured overly simplistically (ie. racialized versus white), and do not consider how intersections of identity might affect outcomes.  Data disaggregation and intersectional analyses are still relatively rare in management research.  Instead, socio-demographic characteristics are often simply "controlled for" within analyses which prevents meaningful insights about members of minority groups.

3. Several faculty members noted that business research is generally rooted within the neo-classical economic paradigm which takes a positivist approach to data collection and analysis. One colleague believed that this outlook objectified research subjects.  Instead of engaging with communities as research partners, the relationship was often transactional.  This faculty member felt that they did not invest enough into building trust with their research subjects.  They indicated that their assumptions and behaviours contributed to exploitation of the very group whose experience they were trying to understand.

The faculty member felt that business schools should offer disadvantaged group members some form of training/development opportunities that may benefit them, rather than just use them as research participants.

4. Research time was viewed as a barrier to equity and inclusion. Since junior faculty are more likely to be members of equity deserving groups, they are more affected by the fact that teaching assignments and loading are done last minute which makes planning for research activities much more difficult. Often teaching assignments and research interests do not align and research interests are not considered when delegating courses. Junior faculty are often left without a champion to help them navigate the system. One interviewee felt that there are conflicting narratives within TRSM - trying to improve research productivity on one hand; but not addressing the teaching load and administrative barriers to being productive on the other hand.  These issues lead to stress and lack of work-life balance; junior faculty often do not have the agency to say 'no' and intersectionality has a bearing on these issues.

5. Finding qualified students and HQP to work on projects was seen as extremely challenging.  Graduate students do not have the time to take on RA responsibilities.  Moreover, some felt that the way that most RAs are selected can disadvantage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.  Many students do not qualify for RA positions or do not even know about them. This leads to cumulative advantage/disadvantage.  One interviewee discussed the gender imbalance among RA applicants.  In their experience, women students were less likely to submit RA applications even if they had superior grades relative to men students.  In response, they decided to individually invite students from their classes to apply to their RA positions.  They found this technique was effective in achieving a better gender

balance in applicants.  Several interviewees discussed the exploitation experienced by international students and the role of the university in perpetuating this exploitation.  They emphasized that the university should provide significantly more resources to international students.

6. Most interviewees discussed their own experiences of being a member of an under-represented group as doctoral and post-doctoral researchers.   As one recounted, "Among the 20 graduate students in the lab, I was the only woman.  When they wanted to take a picture of everyone, they put me right in the middle, to show that they had diversity!"  Interviewees also felt that there was a perception that their successes were due to special treatment of under-represented groups: "…when I got a doctoral research grant, a peer PhD student said: 'yeah they want to show that they (help) women'".  Some interviewees felt that policies meant to promote equity resulted in backlash from majority group members and the perception of 'reverse discrimination'.  Several interviewees recounted experiences of subtle, covert discrimination from their research communities.  A number wondered whether their identity may have disadvantaged them without their knowledge (for example in grant applications which are not evaluated double blind).  One respondent discussed the challenges of work-life balance for academic women due to gendered expectations for household responsibilities and childcare, particularly during the covid-19 pandemic.  There was a perception that there was not enough understanding from the university of the unequal impacts of the pandemic on certain groups of academics.  For example, one interviewee commented that the university offered all pre-tenured faculty a one-year extension on the tenure clock.  This was seen as unfair because the impact of the pandemic has not been equal on everyone.  They recommended that there should

be a more customized approach to support faculty, rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.

7. Several interviewees emphasized the need for more genuine action from the TRSM to promote inclusion among researchers who study issues such as anti-Black racism and Indigeneity. There was a feeling that while EDI language has been incorporated into the strategic plan and promotional materials, there have not been enough changes in day-to-day operations to really shift the culture.  For example, one interviewee felt that research on anti-Black racism was not sufficiently promoted and funded.  The office of Equity and Community Inclusion was seen as an important source of support, but there was concern that EDI was given lip-service within the faculty without being truly reinforced with sufficient resources.

8. Interviewees discussed the systemic bias that exists throughout the university in favour of engineering and science - fields in which women are under-represented. Since research funding tends to be higher in these fields (NSERC), men are more often viewed as 'top' researchers. Research support follows this, including space, staff, etc.  This results in structural inequalities. Essentially, the kinds of research that are considered 'worthy' are dominated by male researchers.  This is often evident in grant application reviews; qualitative research is not considered to be as valid or valuable.  This leads to bias in terms of who gets profiled, nominated for awards, etc.  Not only are qualitative studies viewed as less valuable and valid; because this type of research often takes longer to complete than quantitative studies, several interviewees felt that this was an indirect reason that women academics often fall behind in publications.

9. Participants noted that there are more efforts being made now to be inclusive of different research methods, disciplines, etc. but for many years, BIPOC researchers were held to a higher standard to get the same recognition.  Anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism was viewed to be most prevalent.  Researchers from disadvantaged groups who stand out or speak up are often lightning rods for criticism and censure.  Black and Indigenous scholars are often the targets of backlash and abuse.  According to some interviewees, the cultural norms at Toronto Metropolitan University (although better than many other institutions), still result in gendered expectations of behaviour.  One interviewee stressed that even acknowledging that there may be systemic issues in the institution is risky, particularly for academics who aspire to hold leadership or administrative positions.  Another respondent noted that many people are reticent to speak on these issues because either they feel they have nothing to offer or they "don't want to rock the boat".

10. One respondent discussed the importance of the university setting realistic performance expectations and having discussions with faculty members to understand the barriers they face. They expressed concern that the university strongly favours and celebrates "superstar researchers", without considering the mental health and work-life balance implications.  The respondent believed that the culture is rewarding unrealistic levels of productivity, and it is seen as a negative to not strive for that.  The unrealistic expectations further exacerbate the existing barriers that disadvantaged group members face. It was recommended that the university should have a conversation around what is enough, and also how a range of contributions are valuable.  The respondent felt that publishing for non-academic audiences, for example, should be seen as valid and important.

11. Respondents believed that data and transparency are key to reducing the barriers for stigmatized researchers.  How resources are allocated and distributed should be open and clear. For example, some departments have teams of research facilitators and administrative staff, while others do not. There is also significant discrepancy in the salaries of research centre directors.  According to one interviewee there should be an EDI lens applied to all these decisions, to ensure that policies and practices are equitable.  Several interviewees felt that microaggressions are still very common.  They recommended that there should be regular training for faculty, staff and students to help them understand the issues in order to create an inclusive academic environment.

# OVERALL REFLECTIONS

The objectives of the TRSM Dimensions team in the 2021-2022 academic year were threefold: (1) provide resources to decision makers within the faculty to promote more a more equitable and inclusive research environment; (2) provide training for graduate and undergraduate students on EDI-related issues in research; and (3) gather qualitative data from faculty members in order to form an evidence-based strategy for tackling EDI barriers.

The interviews from faculty members provided rich, nuanced insights into macro-, meso- and micro-level issues that contribute to barriers for disadvantaged groups.

At the macro-level, systems of oppression such as colonialism and patriarchy continue to affect certain groups of academics and students. The backlash from majority group members, and the overall unwillingness by most faculty members to acknowledge these issues or even participate in the Dimensions data collection is a telling sign of the continuing influence of these macro-level forces.

At the meso-level, policies and practices within departments, faculties and the university as a whole contribute to systemic barriers.  For example, expectations of research output, funding and other resource allocation decisions all lead to cumulative inequality and exclusion.

Finally, at the micro-level, subtle discrimination and micro-aggressions, as well as targeted criticism and censure perpetuate disadvantage and maintain the hierarchies of power and privilege.