

Study finds int'l students hurt most by plagiarism regulations

RITA CANT
The Link

MONTREAL (CUP)—Bilal Hamideh, the coordinator of the Concordia Students' Union advocacy centre, estimates that about 300 students come to the centre for defense of plagiarism charges each year—50 per cent of whom are from international backgrounds.

Culture has a big role to play in how we define and identify acts of plagiarism, and a new study from a Concordia University professor is providing some concrete numbers to prove it.

The ongoing study, which began in 2006, is the first to try to quantify cultural differences in how we define plagiarism. Eighty student volunteers were first asked to identify what they would call acts of plagiarism from a line-up of different scenarios.

"Some situations were obvious plagiarism, some were not," explained Andrew Ryder, a psychology professor and the survey's creator.

Especially in ambiguous scenarios, he said, "international students were much less likely to see the scenarios as plagiarism."

After completing the survey once, students were given a copy of Concordia's official definition of plagiarism and asked to repeat the survey.

"On clear cases of plagiarism, after reading the University's policy [definition], 100 per cent of Canadian-born students recognized plagiarism, and only 80 per cent of international students did," Ryder said.

On more ambiguous questions, the Canadian group correctly identified plagiarism 60 per cent of the time, and the non-Canadian group had a 40 per cent success rate.

"Sixty per cent for the Euro-Canadians ain't so great either," Ryder said, but added that the 20 per cent gap between the two groups is a big

difference and cause for concern.

"International students as a group are at a disadvantage," he said. "I'm now more convinced that telling people 'plagiarism is bad' isn't enough."

According to Ryder, the results show that policing efforts will continue to catch unsuspecting plagiarizers until students are educated—well in advance of their assignments—about what constitutes plagiarism.

The preliminary results of the study coincide with the beginning of the University's academic integrity campaign, which was launched after the academic code of conduct was revised over the summer.

"This whole idea of plagiarism and [that] you can't use someone else's ideas—it's a Western concept."

IVONNE LACHAPELLE
CONCORDIA SU ADVOCACY CENTRE

Ryder's findings will be presented to the revisers of the academic code of conduct in October. Until then, the study will continue gathering information to increase the sample size.

The study was born out of a request for quantitative information about the problem from one of Ryder's own students, Ivonne Lachapelle.

Lachapelle, who also works at the advocacy centre, said that international students form a large portion of students seeking advocacy for plagiarism charges.

"The University says because it's written in the academic code of conduct, it's the responsibility of students to know [it]. From this research, we see a lot of students don't know."

"This whole idea of plagiarism and

[that] you can't use someone else's ideas—it's a Western concept," she said.

The office of the Provost recently completed a week of intensive outreach to promote awareness about the definitions and penalties of cheating.

"It comes from the last senate meeting, which approved the new code of conduct with the understanding that we would work with the CSU and students to promote academic integrity and inform students of their responsibilities," explained Danielle Morin, Concordia Vice-Provost (Academic Programs).

Lachapelle explained that Concordia's policies often don't take the intent behind committing an academic misconduct into consideration, and that it can be a point of contention between the advocacy centre and the code administrators.

Morin acknowledges that many of the students who've been caught weren't aware they had violated the code, "but it would be very difficult to read in your mind that you had the intention of [cheating]."

But the code still comes down hard on some students. In the past three years, 14 students have been expelled from Concordia for academic misconduct.

"For an international student, expulsion means you have to leave the country and go home," said Morin, who plans to attend Ryder's presentation, tentatively scheduled for sometime this month. She hopes the study can inform the next awareness campaign.

Both her and Ryder think that increasing awareness is preferable to more policing, but they both agree that policing is necessary too.

"Part of the reason we do these things is to help the students that don't cheat," Ryder said. "If your Concordia degree is easy to get or easy to cheat on, your degree is compromised."

Booze flows freer for students out west

Ontario study examines regional discrepancies of alcoholism statistics

MARGARET SHERIDAN
Interrobang

LONDON (CUP)—A new cross-country survey has shown that some Canadians may consume more alcohol than others.

According to research done for the *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, Ontario and Quebec have the lowest rate of substance abuse. In most of the western provinces, however, the numbers are higher than the national average.

"Geography tends to be ignored in this kind of [study]," explained Scott Veldhuizen, co-author of the study "Geographical Variation in the Prevalence of Problematic Substance Use in Canada."

"We tend to treat the country as homogeneous, but we know from existing work that there are usually differences between regions."

The study showed that rates tended to be lower in central Canada and higher in the west. The average rate of substance abuse in Canada hovered around 11 per cent.

The highest average was in Saskatchewan, where just under

14 per cent of students surveyed exhibited indications of substance abuse; the lowest was in Quebec, at approximately nine per cent.

The study surprised many people by showing that alcohol abuse is less common in large urban centres than their mid-sized counterparts. The study also revealed that the lowest rate of abuse was found in Toronto, at a mere 7.8 per cent, and Montreal, at 8.1 per cent. Mid-sized cities, on the other hand, weighed in at an average of 12.6 per cent.

"It wasn't entirely surprising though, since the situation is quite similar with, for example, crime, which is also highest in mid-sized cities—not in Toronto and Montreal," Veldhuizen said.

Another reason Veldhuizen speculates is behind the lower rates in large cities is correlated to the immigrant population.

"Immigrants tend to settle first in major cities," he said. "Immigrants tend to have low levels of substance use problems. Beyond that, there are a lot of possibilities. People in these areas tend to be a little better off economically and to have more educa-

tion—and, of course, it's been argued that there are also more possibilities for recreation and entertainment."

The study also revealed that students tend to be more susceptible to becoming substance abusers than the majority of the population, complementing data collected in 2002 by Statistics Canada.

"In terms of prevalence, we had three per cent of men 15 years and older [that] were alcohol dependant," said Michael Tjepkema, who works as part of Statistics Canada's Health Statistics Division.

He explained that for women, that value was 1.3 per cent, but in terms of the university population as a whole, the average was 8.6 per cent.

"The people who were most likely to be alcohol dependant are the 20–24 year olds," Tjepkema explained.

"It seems that demographic and income differences may play a role," Veldhuizen added, while stressing, that there's a difference when other factors are taken into account.

"So we end up speculating [...]. Cultural differences, income inequality and other economic differences, local [alcohol] taxes, and restrictions on availability] are all possibilities."



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STUDENTS' UNION BY-ELECTION RESULTS

THE STUDENTS' UNION WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE ELECTED IN THE SEPTEMBER BY-ELECTION:

SU COUNCILLORS:

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & HOME ECONOMICS
 Fawn Jackson

ARTS
 Patrick Wisheu
 Caitlin Schulz
 Basil Bansal

EDUCATION
 Rachel Dunn

ENGINEERING
 Mark Hlady
 Abdul Doctor

MEDICINE & DENTISTRY
 Bayan Hussein

NURSING
 Natalie Cloutier

OPEN STUDIES
 Mark Prokopiuk

SCIENCE
 John Braga
 Mark Hnatiuk
 Jordan Zhang

GFC COUNCILLORS:

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & HOME ECONOMICS
 George Reis
 Taryn Ng

ARTS
 Patrick Wisheu
 Bryant Lukes
 Alex Preston

BUSINESS
 Yuri S. Broda

MEDICINE & DENTISTRY
 Daisy Hartmann
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