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## *Does Race Matter? An Experimental Vignette Study on Harm Severity, College Student Discipline, and Restorative Justice*



**Abstract:** Research suggests individuals' support for harsher sanctions for wrongdoers increase in association with the perceived severity of the harm caused. To date, however, research has focused mostly on retributive modes of punishment and has less often addressed restorative sanctions. Furthermore, research has documented racial disparities in conduct sanctioning, especially within elementary and secondary school based settings, with research suggesting that students of color (e.g., Black students) are sanctioned harsher than White students. Surprisingly, racial disparities in student conduct sanctions within higher education settings have rarely been examined. The present study therefore examined the degree to which individuals' support for types of conduct sanctions (e.g., retributive, restorative, no outcome) differed based on their restorative justice attitudes, global beliefs in a just world, and their perceptions of harm severity. Additionally, this study examined whether participants' support for conduct sanctions differed based on the student's race. Using an experimental research methodology, participants (N = 521) were asked to respond to one of two harm vignettes that varied by manipulation of the wrongdoer's race. Multigroup Structural Equation Modeling (MG-SEM) was used to examine the regression pathways, and the model resulted in adequate fit. Results suggested that there were significant differences in support for conduct sanctions. The results of this research are useful for both restorative and social justice advocates alike, as it provides greater insights that can help address and reform postsecondary campus policies on student judicial conduct practices. Implications for research, advocacy, public policy, and education, training, and psychological practice are discussed.

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