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## **The qualities that students respect in their teachers: Does ethnicity matter?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is part of a broader research project that explores how distinctions in attitudes around the concept of respect contribute to students' perceptions of teacher authority and teaching quality in business schools. The data is derived from a survey administered to students in first year accounting subjects in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The research question is: does the ethnicity of students affect the qualities and attributes they respect in their teachers? The study finds that the survey responses suggest ethnicity impacts in unexpected ways on the different qualities that students respect in their teachers.

*Keywords:* Respect, student perceptions, ethnicity, teacher attributes, teacher qualities

## 1. Introduction and Motivation

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, student cohorts at universities in Australia, New Zealand (NZ) and the United Kingdom (UK) were dominated by ‘Home’ students whose first language is English. Teachers<sup>1</sup> who were concerned about the academic success (or lack of it) of their students perceived success to be related, amongst many other influences, to the quality of teaching often linked to teachers attributes and qualities as evaluated by ‘Home’<sup>2</sup> students. There are many schools of thought on what teacher characteristics are necessary for quality teaching to occur. Previous research on the issue of effective teaching has ranged from research on teacher personality, the teaching environment, pedagogical styles, and so on, with most of the studies considering one or two concepts at a time.

Jahangiri and Mucciolo (2008), for example, describe teaching effectiveness as the teachers’ ability to be useful, helpful and valuable in facilitating lasting intellectual learning through identified personal traits and instructional organization. Overall the general consensus is that effective teaching occurs where students are engaged at their varying levels of understanding and that quality teaching is a multifaceted concept.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the increasing rate of internationalisation of student populations and curriculum has impacted on universities in Australia, NZ and the UK. As a consequence, the dominance of the views of ‘Home’ students of the most admired attributes of teachers may be shifting. It remains problematic what this means for our understanding of the teacher attributes and teaching qualities that students respect.

The initial motivation for this project was a study by Grayson (2007), in which he demonstrated that Chinese and Asian students ranked professors more poorly than did Blacks or those of European origin. This longitudinal study of 513 students in Toronto over four years led us to further consider whether the attitudes of Chinese and Other International students towards their professors might be different from ‘Home’ students. Grayson had hypothesised that his results could be explained because many of the Chinese students came from non-English households, and were less able to

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term ‘teacher’ in a generic sense to denote professor, tutor, lecturer etc.

<sup>2</sup> In this study ‘Home’ student refers to a student whose 1<sup>st</sup> language is English.

understand what was going on in the classroom. Another suggestion was that these students were filtering their opinions through an ‘ideological framework’, assuming differential treatment of minority groups. The author concluded with the observation that resolving these apparent contradictions was beyond the scope of that study.

From reflection on such studies, this research project began to further investigate these issues and discussions. In particular we decided to explore how the idea of hegemony was relevant. We define or understand hegemony as the power of the dominant group to make their views, attitudes and behaviours seem ‘normal’. Hegemony can lead to a mismatch between student and teacher expectations and what is valued between the more powerful and less powerful groups. Certain students may therefore feel aggrieved that what they expected would be important in teaching (and the teacher) and learning was not what they experienced. This mismatch then be reflected in any class assessments or feedback opportunities with students giving voice to their confusion and disappointment in the system as represented by a teacher.

The aim of the overall research project is to explore how culturally-based distinctions in respect contribute to students’ perceptions of teaching quality in relation to various components of the teaching and learning environment in business schools in Australia, NZ and the UK. This first paper reports on findings concerning the relation between the hegemonic constructs of respect and authority, using ethnicity as an independent variable in the analysis. Specifically, the research question is: does the ethnicity (Chinese, Other International or ‘Home’) of a student affect the qualities they respect in their teachers at business schools in a university?

In this paper, ethnicity was determined from responses to the question ‘what is your first language?’ The defining and suitability of proxies for ethnicity in research is a contentious issue and some aspects of this are discussed in an earlier version of the paper<sup>3</sup>, and the authors are preparing a more detailed review of how ethnicity is used in accounting education research, and the most appropriate proxies for ethnicity. In the meantime for the purposes of this paper, we are using the first language spoken by the students as a proxy for ethnicity.

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<sup>3</sup> See Baskerville, Evans, Gillett and Wynn-Williams. Student diversity and concepts of quality teaching: Does ethnicity matter? Presented at AFAANZ 2010, Christchurch New Zealand, July 2010.

Answers to this question were sought through analysis of part of an internet-based survey answered by 282 first-year business school students at a well-established university in each of the following: Australia, NZ and the UK. Broadly speaking, there was a statistically significant difference between ‘Home’ and Chinese students’ and ‘Home’ and Other International students’ perceptions of the teacher attributes that influenced their respect for their teachers. Surprisingly, there was no significant difference between those groups’ perceptions of the qualities of their teachers which influenced their respect for their teachers. Whether from the need of business schools to attract full-fee paying international students or from their desire to broaden and ‘internationalise’ the curriculum, the percentages of Chinese and Other International students in business courses in Western countries is large and growing. This increase in international student enrolments has led to a more diverse student cohort. Hence their perceptions (as differentiated from those of ‘Home’ students) need to be considered.

Pedagogical reasons for studying the way in which students of different ethnicities evaluate their educational experiences also include the importance of reflection about the quality of teaching for the purpose of self improvement. Gaining feedback from students will enable the higher education sector to understand market needs and to design and deliver courses that not only offer benefits to students in their learning experience, but also in the promotion of academic excellence in the changing demographics of the higher education sector.

The next section of the paper presents the relevant literature that informs the empirical project, with a focus on ethnicity, teacher/teaching qualities and respect. This is followed by the method and hypothesis development section explaining the approach to the analysis which examines three questionnaire responses to test the hypotheses. The discussion and concluding comments includes results to date, and indicates future research directions.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

There is little doubt that perceptions affect attitudes and it is no surprise that students’ perceptions of their learning and teaching experience affects their attitude towards education and ultimately the qualities they respect in it (Ferreira and Santoso, 2008).

It is also arguably the case that one's ethnicity is influential in this. This review therefore presents literature about the expectations and perceptions of students of different ethnicities, particularly of those in business courses in the higher education sector, concerning their evaluation of the teaching they have experienced. Research exploring students' comments on their learning process, in particular of their teachers, is included to support the findings of this paper.

Ferreira and Santoso (2008) used a Likert-style survey to examine the relation between students' perceptions of education and their performance in an accounting subject. The researchers conclude that student perceptions impact on learning outcomes more than the actual teaching method. This view is supported by other authors including Entwistle, McCune and Hounsell (2002) who suggest that positive perceptions of the teaching and learning process lead to deep learning, whereas negative perceptions lead to surface learning by students. Ferreira and Santoso (2008) also suggest that trends in student perceptions are affected by differences in age, maturity, ethnicity and gender.

Another study by Okpala and Ellis (2005) focused exclusively on teacher qualifications in the assessment of teacher quality by students in historically Black Colleges and Universities in the USA, finding a variance in perceptions of college students on teacher quality components. Whether the socio-cultural background of the students affected the results of this study was not considered.

A study into English language needs of students with 45 professors and lecturers in business colleges in Hong Kong, concluded that there was:

... a general consensus that first-year students, in particular, experienced difficulties in handling discourses from different disciplines, both in their writing tasks and in their readings. They suffered from a lack of understanding of disciplinary frames and were sometimes unsure of what was expected of them" (Jackson 2005, p. 304).

However, this study did not extend as far as students' perception of respect and authority in these Business Schools. When Chinese students in MBA programmes in the UK were interviewed, Currie (2007, p. 540) found a wide range of attitudes towards the UK MBA pedagogy: some embraced it enthusiastically, but others experienced some marginalisation, partly due to the "... patriarchal and ethnocentric

approaches embedded in the MBA pedagogy”. In particular, Currie (2007, p. 553) recommends that optimal pedagogical interventions are characterized (1) by attention to climate setting; (2) when the teacher used ‘emotional disruption’ as a constructive part of the learning process; (3) by the teacher remaining vigilant to power dynamics in the class; and (4) by teachers retaining some awareness of the ethnocentrism embedded in business and management syllabi. All these are descriptions of teacher qualities as displayed in the classroom.

Other Chinese MBA students in the UK related the fact that their belief in the expertise of the teacher was displaced if the teacher encouraged discussion to which students were expected to contribute, being seen by them as a “... time-wasting and unnecessary sideshow” (Currie 2007, p. 544). An earlier study by Jin and Cortazzi (2006, p. 19) also reflects this finding, noting that “... given the cultures where respect for the teacher and text often predominate over asking of questions and posing of doubts, ‘critical’ can be interpreted as not showing respect”.

In the relevant literature, there is a considerable amount written about Chinese learners in particular, and thus we present much of this as one well articulated ethnic viewpoint which is different from that of ‘Home’ students. Examples of ‘culture bumps’ (Jiang, 2001) experienced by Chinese learners include disparities in learning style and culture between the Chinese learner and domestic students (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991). Domestic students are perceived as having an inquisitive and analytical way of learning and thinking, whereas traditionally Chinese learners perceive quality learning as involving memorisation (Chan, 1999). This example shows a clear difference between the system in which Chinese learners find themselves when they go overseas and the philosophical values in which they have been traditionally nurtured. The following quotation may demonstrate why a Confucian approach to life might influence perceptions of learning (and thereby attitudes towards teachers). Quoting Confucius, Ballard and Clanchy (1991, p.10) state: “I am not a man born wise. I favour what is ancient and strive to know it well”. This background may lead Chinese learners to misuse literature by rote learning and reproducing subject content (Martinson and Martinson, 1996). Yet, in their traditional educational system, doing so is a way of showing respect and acknowledgement to the authority of the source (Chan, 1999).

A cultural bump is also evident in the way that Chinese learners perceive their role as students in the higher education system. An Australian study suggests that teachers have to earn domestic students' respect, (Bradley and Bradley, 1984), whereas Confucianism requires "... obedience to, and respect for superiors ..." (Woo, 1999, p. 117). As such, in practise Chinese learners tend to use indirect approaches to put their ideas across in order to maintain respect and harmony (Tan and Goh, 1999). Moreover, due to this 'socialised vulnerability,' Chinese learners are less likely to ask for support even when they don't understand specific concepts (Chan, 1999). Kirkbride and Tang (1992) suggest that this is because Confucian values emphasise modesty, and consequently Chinese learners will often be reluctant to question concepts or express their own opinions so as not to embarrass or offend superiors (Chan, 1999).

Some authors, however, have warned against the widespread notion of the Chinese learner by suggesting that such notions are social constructs that reinforce hegemonic views and the exclusivity of those deemed to be 'others.' This reflects some extensive debate in sociological and anthropological literature concerning the validity of distinctions between race, and ethnicity, both being the same social construction (Annisette 2009). In another example of research on the Chinese learner, Cloverdale-Jones (2006) argues that the Chinese learner's identity is one that has become established by academics who assume that Chinese students have consistent Chinese behaviour patterns visible in their learning; for example, the assumption that Chinese learners are quiet, surface learners who do not perform as well as domestic students in Higher Education. Wang and Shan, (2007) also critically examine the widely held view that Chinese learners prefer passive and teacher-directed learning. They suggest that Australian academics should consider international students' learning style preferences and adapt their pedagogical practices to students' needs.

Also students of differing ethnicities may gain or lose respect for their teachers based on the style with which they teach. For example, Holmes (2004) studied thirteen ethnic Chinese students studying in a New Zealand learning environment, and exposed differences in communication and learning between their first culture and the host culture. The students were not prepared for the dialogic nature of classroom communication and written assignments that embodied different expectations of



writing styles, nor did they have an understanding of the meaning of critical analysis and plagiarism.

The topic of interest in this study is whether there are differences in the way 'Home', Chinese and other international learners perceive quality teaching, in particular as affected by perceived respect for teachers. While there are differences in the socio-cultural and educational backgrounds of Chinese learners, leading to different perceptions of and adaptations to 'western type education', studies of learning processes reveal that Chinese learners are diligent, achievement driven and have a high regard for their education (Biggs and Watkins, 1996).

Respect in Chinese society comes from hierarchical relationships articulated in Confucianism. These relationships are between ruler and subject; father and son; husband and wife; elder brother and younger brother; friend and friend (Ho and Ho, 2008; Yee, 2009). Hennock (2009, p. 41) suggests that one could "blame it on Confucius, who emphasized deference to one's elders and teachers. His influence still haunts China's education system". In any examination of student perceptions of teachers respect is an important component for Chinese learners.

In researching whether ethnicity plays a role in students' concepts of quality teaching, a consideration where or how students develop their expectations and perceptions of learning is relevant. Smith and Zhang (2009) suggest that students develop perceptions about learning from hearsay, personal experience, different types of literature such as brochures and ethno-cultural diversity amongst a plethora of other things. Ethno-cultural diversity affects Chinese learners' perceptions of learning and teaching in the form of the socio-cultural adjustment problems they face in adapting to the host country's method of teaching and learning including, but not limited to, different educational expectations, use of English for instruction and also unfamiliar accents (Andrade, 2006).

This review has identified that there are discrepancies in the perceptions and conceptions of teachers and students in relation to quality teaching. It has also identified claims that there is no one homogenous approach to student perceptions of quality teaching, and that different students perceive teaching quality in different ways. This review suggests a number of important themes in investigating whether

ethnicity plays a role in students' perceptions of quality. While it is correct to say that ethnicity "transcend[s] specific situations, including education and educational theories", (Schwarz and Bilsky, 1987, p. 551), "[c]ultural differences can either be a source of creativity and enlarged perspectives, or they can be a source of difficulties and miscommunication" (Anbari, 2004, p. 273).

While we concede that students' perceptions of their learning is not necessarily an accurate measure of their actual learning, there are clearly student-teacher disparities in perceptions of what is quality teaching. The identification of students' perceptions and expectations and successful alignment of course and professional requirements may assist in the development of strategies that provide the best chances for students' success by enhancing their awareness of the subject matter and the context of their study. The literature suggests that Chinese learners do not question the quality of their learning, they question its effect. Given that the overall aim of the research is to explore how culturally-based distinctions in respect contribute to students' perceptions of quality in relation to learning and teaching environments in business schools, we next turn to the hypotheses to be tested in this empirical study.

With the current emphasis on internationalisation and business schools' increasing dependency on the revenue from overseas students, the dynamics of the classroom are shifting. The power of 'Home' students no longer dominates and international students (particularly Chinese students) are changing student and teacher expectations and attitudes to what is valued as teacher attributes and qualities. Therefore it is expected that there will be differences between the perceptions of 'Home' students and Chinese students and 'Home' and Other International students in relation to teacher attributes and qualities. Consequently the hypotheses are stated as follows:

H1a: There is a difference between the perceptions of 'Home' and Chinese students of the attributes which influence their respect for their teachers.

H1b: There is a difference between the perceptions of 'Home' and Other International students of the attributes which influence their respect for their teachers.

H2a: There is a difference between the perceptions of 'Home' and Chinese students of the qualities of their teachers which influences their respect for their teachers.

H2b: There is a difference between the perceptions of 'Home' and Other International students of the qualities of their teachers which influences their respect for their teachers.

### **3. Research Method**

The data collection occurred through online survey software. First-year accounting students at three universities in Australia, NZ and the UK were invited in class, via Blackboard announcements and/or by email from a known teacher to complete an anonymous online survey. This project had the objective of answering the question: "Does the ethnicity (Chinese, Other International or 'Home') of a student affect the qualities they respect in their teachers at business schools in a university?"

Accordingly, the survey included five questions in particular to assist the researchers identify the ethnicity of respondents. After careful consideration, the question used to determine the ethnicity of respondents was "What is your first language"? All those who cited Chinese, Cantonese or Mandarin as their first language were treated as 'Chinese' for the purposes of this study. Those whose first language was English and who lived in the same country as the university they attended were treated as 'Home' students<sup>4</sup>. The survey questions are original to this research, were developed from the extant literature and pilot tested at each of the three universities.

The sample population for the survey was the first year intake of students studying accounting<sup>5</sup> in each of the three universities. Students studying accounting were chosen as the sample population due to the proportionally large numbers of Chinese and Other International students as compared to other subject disciplines. There is a strong element of internationalisation inherent to this research, supported by the diverse ethnicities of the respondents and also by involving universities in three different English-speaking countries. By including these different sites and collaborators, we hope to identify the commonalities and differences of student perceptions in these three geographically distinct locations. Having three different international university settings strengthens our capacity to generalise and is therefore has the potential to be more powerful in its conclusions. Also this may allow us to

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<sup>4</sup> There were 6 exchange students who were excluded from the results reported in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> All the students were not necessarily enrolled in an accounting degree.

better identify which aspects of findings are specific to a country, or which reflect such attitudes of ethnicities in learning in tertiary environments world-wide.

Insert Table 1 about here

The research instrument consists of two sections. The first section required respondents to provide demographic data such as university, degree enrolment, gender and ethnicity (sought in various ways). The second section consists of seventeen questions<sup>6</sup> which relate to students' perceptions of: respect for teachers (3 – see Appendix); factors that contribute to their learning and their motivation (5); assessment (3); and university experiences (6).

This paper analyses the three questions concerning perceptions of the qualities and attributes in teachers which students respect. The questions used in this analysis to explore respect are:

Q11 How important are the following attributes<sup>7</sup> in influencing your respect for a professor or other teacher? (Ten attributes, or statements, were listed for choice; see Appendix for details.)

Q13 Rank the following statements regarding your respect for your professor or teacher. (Five statements were presented for ranking in order of importance; see Appendix for details.)

Are there other qualities which influence your respect for a professor or other teacher not already mentioned? (This was open-ended, inviting additional responses.)

Questions 11 and 13 were analysed using *MANOVA* and *ANOVA* to extract statistical significance between the three ethnic categories. As well, the differences are portrayed in visually representational bar graphs. This is discussed further in the next section.

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<sup>6</sup> These questions were devised by the researchers and pilot tested at the three universities.

<sup>7</sup> An option for 'Other' was included.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographic details of respondents

The total population of first year students in the three jurisdictions who were asked to participate in the survey are as follows:

Insert Table 2 about here

### 4.2 Teacher attributes influencing students' respect (H1a and H1b)

A multivariate test (*MANOVA*) was used to determine whether a significant difference in perception existed between 'Home' and Chinese students and 'Home' and Other International students across all ten statements. *MANOVA* results indicate a significant difference existed between 'Home' and Chinese students ( $p=0.000$ ) and 'Home' and Other International students ( $p=0.000$ ). The results support H1a and H1b that there is a significant between the perceptions of 'Home' and Chinese students of the attributes which influence their respect for their teachers and there is a significant difference between the perceptions of 'Home' and Other International students of the attributes which influence their respect for their teachers.

Further univariate tests (*ANOVA*) were used to test for differences between these three groups in each of the ten statements. *ANOVA* results indicate significant differences in teacher attributes that influence students' respect for teacher between 'Home' and Chinese students and 'Home' and Other International students at  $p < 0.05$  (in relation to statements (1) qualifications, (2) authority/control and (10) work experience). Further analysis of the individual questions is provided in the following sections. Descriptive statistics are reported in Tables 3a and 4a and results from the multivariate and univariate tests for each of the ten statements are reported in Tables 3b and 4b.

Insert Tables 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b about here

Follow up analysis was undertaken by comparing the percentage of respondents who ranked 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, that is "very important" or "considerable influence" when asked "How important are these attributes in influencing your respect for a professor or

other teacher?” Again, the results indicate differences between ‘Home’ students when compared with both Chinese and Other International students.

Insert Figure 1 about here

#### *Responses for the ‘Other’ option*

There were a small number of open-ended responses in the text area allowed under ‘Other’ (27 respondents). Within this there was roughly the same proportion from each group other than the Chinese for whom there were only three.

The first additional idea that emerged was that of the need for good English-speaking ability. This was mentioned by all groups apart from the UK group. For example, “speech, for what we pay we earn the right to a non-accented lecturer” (New Zealand ‘Home’ student) and “good English-speaking” offered by an Other International student. “Clarity” and “the ability to communicate” also were suggested several times each. Mentioned only once were “Involved”, “stimulating”, and “able to listen”.

These responses support the “people and management” skills ranked highly by ‘Home’ students. It is surprising that English-speaking ability was sufficiently important to be added in as contributing towards respect.

#### **4.3 Teacher qualities influencing respect**

A multivariate test (*MANOVA*) was used to determine whether a significant difference in perception existed between ‘Home’ and Chinese students, and between ‘Home’ and Other International students, across the five statements which respondents were asked to place into rank order. *MANOVA* results indicate no significant difference existed between ‘Home’ and Chinese students ( $p=0.804$ ) and ‘Home’ and Other International students ( $p=0.151$ ). The results do not support H2a that there is a difference between the perceptions of Chinese and ‘Home’ students of the qualities of their teachers which influence their respect for their teachers. However, the results, though not statistically significant, do indicate a higher level of support for the claim that there is a difference between the perceptions of Home and Other International students of the qualities of their teachers which influence their respect for their teachers.

Further univariate tests (*ANOVA*) were used to test for differences between these three groups in each of the five ranked statements. Whilst overall there is no significant difference, *ANOVA* results indicate significant differences in teacher qualities that influence students' respect for teacher between 'Home' and Other International students at  $p < 0.05$  (options (1) they do not express uncertainty or lack of knowledge; and (5) they behave in a totally professional manner). The Other International students placed a higher ranking on "They behave in a totally professional manner" than the Home students. In contrast, the 'Home' students placed a higher ranking on "no uncertainty or lack of knowledge." Further analyses on the individual questions are provided in the following sections. Descriptive are reported in Tables 5a and 6a and results from the multivariate and univariate tests for each of the five statements are reported in Tables 5b and 6b.

Insert Tables 5a, 5b, 6a and 6b about here

Follow up analysis was undertaken by comparing the percentage of respondents who ranked statements in relation to teacher qualities they most respected. The results indicate little difference between 'Home' students when compared with Chinese students. However, there is a greater difference between 'Home' and Other International students.

Insert Figure 2 about here

#### *Responses for the 'Other qualities which influence your respect ...'*

There were generous offerings in the opportunity to add further commentary to the ranking statements that relate to respect for the professor or lecturer question than in the multi (46 respondents). All groups contributed roughly equally, and some responses were quite lengthy.

The first main idea coming forth was that of Language. Some examples were: "Queens English if possible" (UK 'Home' student), "being able to communicate well in the English language" (International student) and "not having an accent" (Australian 'Home').

The second repeated suggestion was to do with Clarity. For example, a UK 'Home' student wrote of the importance of "being able to explain things in a clear and more

basic way when needed”. An International student placed importance on “being able to make the student understand the key concept 100%”, and a NZ ‘Home’ student “to simplify complex things”.

The last recurrent suggestion was to do with the idea of an equal and respectful relationship both ways. Relevant comments were: “get a bit resentful when lecturers act superior” (New Zealand ‘Home’ student), “respect towards students” (International student) and “eye contact” (UK ‘Home’ student).

One difference qualitatively between the UK ‘Home’ and all the others was the emphasis by the UK students on the lecturers being interesting, not repetitive, not just reading off the lecture slides, and also being approachable and answering emails promptly. This was also noticeable in the focus groups<sup>8</sup>. Overall, many of the additional suggestions for both questions concerned the idea of quality teaching firstly with regard to clarity, and secondly with respect to listening and respecting the student in the learning process.

The only noticeable distinct patterns of difference between groups were the smaller proportion of open-ended responses by the Chinese cohort. This in itself may reflect those with less facility with English, as the Likert scale sections of the survey did not demand typing in any expansion of their views. Nervousness concerning errors is increased as on-line surveys also do not offer a spell-check. Additionally, as teachers, all of the researchers have experienced lack of willingness to participate to open discussion in the classrooms from non-’Home’ students, and it is possible the lack of additional suggestions in the survey responses reflects the same inhibition.

To ensure that the results were not driven by gender or university we undertook further sensitivity analyses. After controlling for the effect of gender and university affiliation the association between perceptions of respect and ethnicity the differences between Home students and Chinese and Other international students (H1a and H1b) were still significant ( $p = 0.001$ ).

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<sup>8</sup> Results from focus groups will be reported in a future paper.



## 5. Findings, Limitations and Contributions

This research sought an answer to the question “Does ethnicity (Chinese, Other International or ‘Home’) of a student affect the qualities they respect in their lecturers/professors at business schools in a university?” Based on the responses of a large cohort of students enrolled in first year accounting courses in three universities (in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand) we concluded that it does, but in ways different from those expected by the research team.

Finding One: When asked what attributes influenced their respect for teachers, both Chinese and Other International students in particular ranked ‘Qualifications’ and ‘Professional/work experience’ more highly than ‘Home’ students. This may be explained by their traditional education system where respect is shown to those who are perceived to be authoritative (or wise) (Chan, 1999).

Finding Two: ‘Home’ students ranked ‘authority and/or control in the classroom’ more highly than both Chinese and Other International students. This was a surprising outcome, as we had anticipated an opposite result based on scholarship addressing the origins of respect founded in Confucian philosophy etc, which places emphasis on wisdom and respect for elders.

Finding Three: In other dimensions of teacher attributes such as reputation, appearance, gender and keeping to/being on time, there were no significant differences. However, Chinese students did rank these attributes as being slightly more important than ‘Home’ students. From Figure 1, an interesting observation is that Other International students’ ranked age and gender as being more important when compared with ‘Home’ students. The clear demarcation between the values placed on age by Other International students compared with Home students is not apparent in the statistical analysis, but appears in the bar charts based on first and second rankings.

Finding Four: When asked about their respect for teachers in relation to teacher qualities, our findings do not support widely held perceptions that Chinese students want ‘right answers’ and are most concerned with uncertainty. They did not rank these qualities higher than ‘Home’ students, and were very close to the ranking given by Other International students. Results of univariate tests did show a significant

difference between 'Home' and Other International students in relation to the qualities of 'do not express uncertainty or lack of knowledge' and 'behave in a totally professional manner'.

Finding Five: The open-ended question allowing the students to contribute any suggestions of ideas or concepts regarding attributes of respect for a lecturer led to an interesting discovery: that of 'clarity' as an attribute of value to students. This touches on language, ethnicity, thinking processes, design of curriculum and teaching strategies, and will be a valuable aspect to further consider in future phases of this project which will be based on focus groups. Whilst other researchers have also considered the role ethnicity plays in the development of perceptions of quality teaching, it is our view that a more progressive question would be: "How can we ensure that students' perceptions of quality teaching align to the reality of the course and university experience?" In this, we would concur with Hipsher (2006) in recognising that "everyone has a unique world view based on their own individual personality and cultural background". Such a starting point will assist university teachers to determine what works best overall, for all students.

As with any study of this nature there are a number of limitations. First, the low response rate limits the generalisability of the results. While online surveys are easier to administer and less costly than mailed or distributed paper surveys, response rates are low compared with these other forms of survey. In lectures and tutorials the researchers invited students to participate; made the URL available on Blackboard; and sent reminder emails to students. Other procedures to increase response rates would not have preserved students' anonymity. Second, the determination of ethnicity from responses to the question 'what is your first language?' was a conscious choice by the researchers, after examining responses to five questions concerning origins and identity. We would concur that:

The categorical system of every language ... points its speakers toward somewhat different evaluations of externally similar observations. Hence speakers of different languages have somewhat different views of the world, somewhat different habitual thought, and consequently, their language and cultural knowledge are in a somewhat different relationship to each other ... The more dissimilar two languages are ... the greater is their tendency to embody different world views (Werner, 1994, p. 3657).

Although there are an increasing number of ‘second generation’ students whose first language is English, but with a cultural background of Indian, Middle Eastern and Asian, their first language is likely to dominate cultural values. Religion may also be a focussed indicator of ethnicity; this survey, however, determined a high non-response rate with multiple answers to a question regarding religious beliefs. Religion, therefore, was not included in the proxy for ethnicity.

Finally, the nature of the statements relating to teacher attributes and qualities may not have captured these concepts accurately. This is particularly true in relation to Question 13 where respondents were asked to rank five statements but were not given the opportunity to add any of their own statements relating to respect. We may have limited the options or misspecified the statements that best express teacher qualities that gain respect from students.

An interesting preliminary finding that needs further investigation involves the stereotyping of Chinese students as requiring more ‘certainty’ than other students, which is not supported by this study. This is in contrast to the views of those such as Jiang (2006, p. 546): “Teachers by definition are those who know more than their students and teach their students, therefore they are at a higher level in the social hierarchy than students. Hence, their role as teachers gives them authority over students”. We conclude that the authority is granted by the students, rather than predetermined by the nature of the teachers’ role.

A contribution of the study lies in its originality of conception and research design, in particular the survey instrument, and also in the diverse cross-jurisdictional sources of the respondents. Research participants from three universities in three parts of the world, including a number of different ethnicities, has the potential to increase overall generalisability. In addition the unexpected homogeneity in some of the views of these three groups of students provides a robust baseline with which to compare International students’ views in other research environments. There are therefore a number of ways it could be developed, extended or reinterpreted. Such a piece of research is rich in present and future value, as there are challenges for teachers in responding to differences, rather than engaging in deficit approaches to teaching and learning.

These findings raise challenges for teachers in responding to differences in students' perception of quality and the possible impact on approaches to teaching and learning. The diversity in the classroom presents challenges for staff and all students, and host institutions need to find ways of developing diversity awareness and appreciation. Therefore one suggestion from this study is that further research addressing such questions in longitudinal studies, or across more jurisdictions, may provide confirmatory findings, which in turn may inform academic professional development to ensure that what all students' want, expect and get in a teaching context is aligned.

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## **Appendix: Extracts from the Research Instrument<sup>9</sup>**

### **Question 11**

How important are these attributes in influencing your respect for a professor or other teacher? (5-point Likert scale where 1 = Very important and 5 = No effect at all)

1. Qualifications
2. Authority and/or control in the classroom
3. Reputation
4. Appearance
5. Age
6. Gender
7. Friendliness
8. Use of humour
9. Being on time and keeping to tome
10. Professional qualifications or work experience

### **Question 13**

Rank the following statements regarding your respect for the professor or teacher.  
(#1 reflects your respect most of all)

I respect a professor when they do not express any uncertainty and lack of knowledge in response to a question

I respect a professor when they behave with authority

I respect a professor when they talk slowly and clearly

Tutorials or lectures taken by a professor are of more value to me than those taken by another tutor

I respect a professor who behaves in a totally professional manner

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<sup>9</sup> The complete version of the research instrument can be requested from the corresponding author

**Table 1: Survey Numbers and Usable Response Rates**

	Students invited	Dates	Via	Response rate
UK	485	Dec 2008 – February 2009	Approach with a personal invitation in the lecture, as well as a link on WebCT and an email with the URL	100/485 20.6%
NZ	700 + 700	July-Sept 2009	As the survey was held in semester two, an email was sent to the semester one students via an email; semester two students were approached with a personal invitation in the lecture, as well as a link on Blackboard	96/1400 6.9%
Australia	450	October 2009	Invitation to students in the lecture, on Blackboard and via a personal email. A reminder email was sent in late October.	80/450 17.8%

**Table 2: Demographic Data of Respondents**

	First language English		First language Chinese		Other International		
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Australia	11	22	26	8	8	5	80
New Zealand	53	22	3	2	11	5	96
United Kingdom	40	30	8	3	8	11	100
Total	104	74	37	13	27	21	276
This Table includes students whose first language was English but were not necessarily Home students							
It does not include the 6 respondents - probably Exchange students at the UK University - who stated they were not from any of the three Universities, nor one who did not wish to disclose their gender							
Not all these respondents answered the three questions analysed in this report							



**Table 3a: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Attributes Influencing Students' Respect across Ten Statements for 'Home' and Chinese Business Students**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Q11-1 Qualifications	'Home'	2.25	.981	164
	Chinese	1.79	.832	47
	Total	2.15	.967	211
Q11-2 Authority/control in classroom	'Home'	1.689	.6790	164
	Chinese	1.979	.7658	47
	Total	1.754	.7077	211
Q11-3 Reputation	'Home'	2.25	.999	164
	Chinese	2.04	.806	47
	Total	2.20	.962	211
Q11-4 Appearance	'Home'	3.07	1.077	164
	Chinese	2.98	1.032	47
	Total	3.05	1.066	211
Q11-5 Age	'Home'	3.65	1.026	164
	Chinese	3.62	1.074	47
	Total	3.64	1.034	211
Q11-6 Gender	'Home'	4.3	1.024	164
	Chinese	4.06	1.131	47
	Total	4.25	1.050	211
Q11-7 Friendliness	'Home'	1.90	.816	164
	Chinese	1.81	.798	47
	Total	1.88	.811	211
Q11-8 Use of humour	'Home'	2.08	.913	164
	Chinese	2.23	.865	47
	Total	2.11	.903	211
Q11-9 Being on time	'Home'	1.88	.905	164
	Chinese	1.74	.846	47
	Total	1.85	.892	211
Q11-10 Professional work experience	'Home'	2.80	1.168	164
	Chinese	2.02	.872	47
	Total	2.63	1.154	211

**Table 3b: Results of Multivariate and Univariate Tests for Teacher Attributes Influencing Students' Respect across Ten Statements Between 'Home' and Chinese Business Students**

Question	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Multivariate test (Ten Questions)				3.944	<b>0.000 ***</b>
Univariate tests:					
Q11-1	1	7.823	7.823	8.668	<b>0.004***</b>
Q11-2	1	3.066	3.066	6.275	<b>0.013**</b>
Q11-3	1	1.572	1.572	1.705	0.193
Q11-4	1	.326	.326	.286	0.593
Q11-5	1	.031	.031	.029	0.864
Q11-6	1	2.123	2.123	1.932	0.166
Q11-7	1	.322	.322	.489	0.485
Q11-8	1	.875	.875	1.073	0.301
Q11-9	1	.650	.650	.816	0.367
Q11-10	1	22.083	22.083	17.935	<b>0.000 ***</b>

**\*\*Significant at 1%**

**\*\*Significant at 5%**

**Table 4a: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Attributes Influencing Students' Respect across Ten Statements for 'Home' and Other International Business Students**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Q11-1 Qualifications	'Home'	2.25	.981	164
	Other Int'l	1.68	.755	47
	Total	2.12	.963	211
Q11-2 Authority/control in classroom	'Home'	1.689	.6790	164
	Other Int'l	1.957	.8836	47
	Total	1.749	.7358	211
Q11-3 Reputation	'Home'	2.25	.999	164
	Other Int'l	2.34	1.166	47
	Total	2.27	1.036	211
Q11-4 Appearance	'Home'	3.07	1.077	164
	Other Int'l	3.19	1.227	47
	Total	3.10	1.110	211
Q11-5 Age	'Home'	3.65	1.026	164
	Other Int'l	3.62	1.226	47
	Total	3.64	1.070	211
Q11-6 Gender	'Home'	4.30	1.024	164
	Other Int'l	4.28	1.192	47
	Total	4.30	1.061	211
Q11-7 Friendliness	'Home'	1.90	.816	164
	Other Int'l	1.94	1.030	47
	Total	1.91	.865	211
Q11-8 Use of humour	'Home'	2.08	.913	164
	Other Int'l	2.15	1.083	47
	Total	2.09	.951	211
Q11-9 Being on time	'Home'	1.88	.905	164
	Other Int'l	1.70	.858	47
	Total	1.84	.896	211
Q11-10 Professional work experience	'Home'	2.80	1.168	164
	Other Int'l	2.11	1.068	47
	Total	2.64	1.180	211

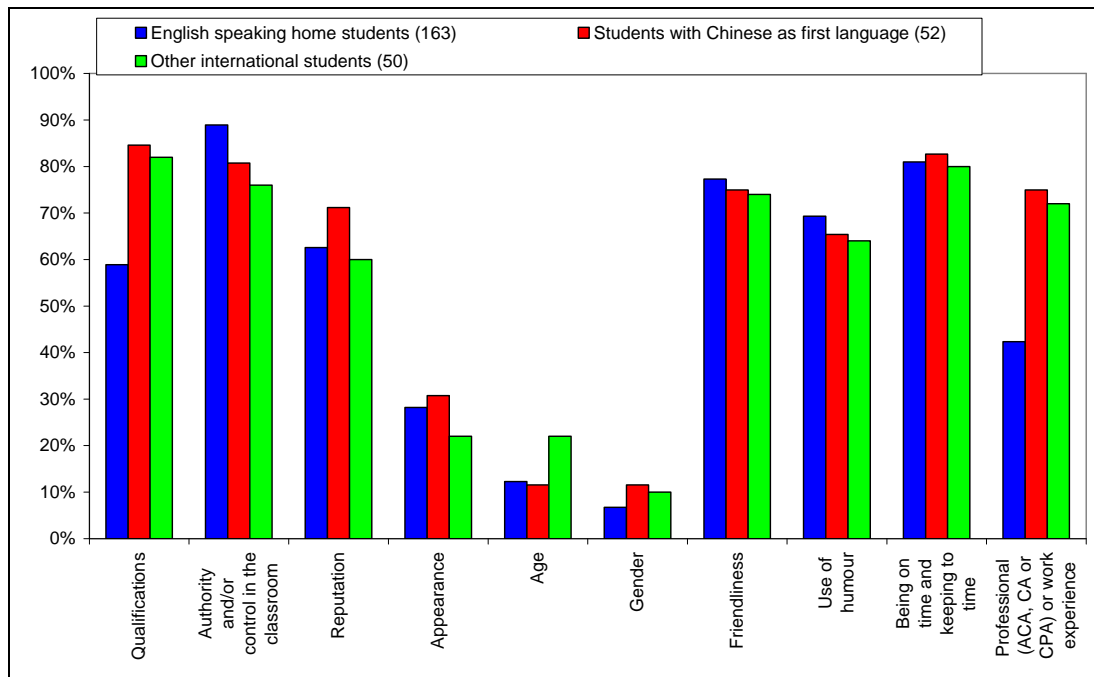
**Table 4b: Results of Multivariate and Univariate Tests for Teacher Attributes Influencing Students' Respect across Ten Statements Between 'Home' and Other International Business Students**

Question	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Multivariate test (Ten Questions)				3.862	<b>0.000 ***</b>
Univariate tests:					
Q11-1	1	11.833	11.833	13.517	<b>0.000***</b>
Q11-2	1	2.632	2.632	4.953	<b>0.027**</b>
Q11-3	1	.299	.299	.277	0.599
Q11-4	1	.511	.511	.414	0.521
Q11-5	1	.031	.031	.027	0.869
Q11-6	1	.029	.029	.026	0.872
Q11-7	1	.042	.042	.055	0.814
Q11-8	1	.177	.177	.195	0.659
Q11-9	1	1.131	1.131	1.412	0.236
Q11-10	1	17.513	17.513	13.319	<b>0.000 ***</b>

**\*\*\* Significant at 1%**

**\*\* Significant at 5%**

**Figure 1: The percentage of respondents who ranked 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> i.e. “very important” or “considerable influence” when asked “How important are these attributes in influencing your respect for a professor or other teacher”?**



**Table 5a: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Qualities Influencing Students’ Respect across Five Statements for ‘Home’ and Chinese Business Students**

Question	Ethnicity	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Q13-1 No uncertainty or lack of knowledge	‘Home’	1.95	1.208	170
	Chinese	2.07	1.323	46
	Total	1.97	1.231	216
Q13-2 Behave with authority	‘Home’	3.23	1.231	170
	Chinese	3.37	1.162	46
	Total	3.26	1.215	216
Q13-3 Talk slowly and clearly	‘Home’	2.91	1.300	170
	Chinese	2.93	1.389	46
	Total	2.92	1.316	216
Q13-4 Value professor’s lectures over tutors	‘Home’	3.39	1.411	170
	Chinese	3.35	1.418	46
	Total	3.38	1.409	216
Q13-5 Professional behaviour	‘Home’	3.52	1.342	170
	Chinese	3.28	1.393	46
	Total	3.47	1.353	216

**Table 5b: Results of Multivariate and Univariate Tests for Teacher Qualities Influencing Students' Respect across Five Statements Between 'Home' and Chinese Business Students**

Question	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Multivariate test (Five Statements)				.406	.804
Univariate tests:					
Q13-1	1	.505	.505	.332	0.565
Q13-2	1	.711	.711	.480	0.489
Q13-3	1	.019	.019	.011	0.916
Q13-4	1	.059	.059	.030	0.863
Q13-5	1	2.101	2.101	1.148	0.285

**Table 6a: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Qualities Influencing Students' Respect across Five Statements for 'Home' and Other International Business Students**

Question	Ethnicity	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Q13-1 No uncertainty or lack of knowledge	'Home'	1.95	1.208	170
	Other Int'l	2.36	1.187	47
	Total	2.04	1.213	217
Q13-2 Behave with authority	'Home'	3.23	1.231	170
	Other Int'l	3.28	1.330	47
	Total	3.24	1.250	217
Q13-3 Talk slowly and clearly	'Home'	2.91	1.300	170
	Other Int'l	2.98	1.622	47
	Total	2.93	1.372	217
Q13-4 Value professor's lectures over tutors	'Home'	3.39	1.411	170
	Other Int'l	3.32	1.476	47
	Total	3.37	1.422	217
Q13-5 Professional behaviour	'Home'	3.52	1.342	170
	Other Int'l	3.06	1.275	47
	Total	3.42	1.339	217

**Table 6b: Results of Multivariate and Univariate Tests for Teacher Qualities Influencing Students’ Respect across Five Statements Between ‘Home’ and Other International Business Students**

Question	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance Level
Multivariate test (Five Statements)				.1699	.151
Univariate tests:					
Q13-1	1	6.330	6.330	4.371	<b>0.038**</b>
Q13-2	1	.082	.082	.052	0.819
Q13-3	1	.165	.165	.087	0.768
Q13-4	1	.176	.176	.087	0.769
Q13-5	1	7.781	7.781	4.412	<b>0.037**</b>

**\*\* Significant at 5%**

**Figure 2: The percentage of respondents who ranked with 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> rank the following five statements about their teachers i.e. “I respect the lecturer most when ... “**

