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# **6<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Dutch HRM Network Diversity in International Perspectives**

***“Respect for Cultural Diversity in a Global Society”***

***Promoting International Harmonious Working Relationships***

**Presentation by: **Doirean Wilson** HR Senior Lecturer, Professional Practitioner & Chartered FCIPD**



**Middlesex University Business School**



# Presentation Format



1. Introduction to the research
2. My research question
3. Context to the study – organisation and audience
4. Overview of the research paper
5. What is respect? – definitions
6. A Review of Literature
7. Developments in Diversity thinking
8. Methodology
9. Findings – from phase 1 of the research (2007-2008)
10. Conclusions
11. Question & Answer session

# 1. Introduction

## **An Exploration of the Relationship Between Respect and Culture**

The study is based on an evaluation of **the meaning of respect in a 21<sup>st</sup> century global learning environment**, with a view to exploring the implications for promoting harmonious working relationships among students of cultural difference in the classroom.



## **2. My Research Question**



***“How Do I, as an Educator, Create an Environment of Respect for Culture, in the Classroom Learning Relationship, to nurture harmonious team-working, and to improve My Professional Practice?”***



## 3. Context to the study



### Evidence drawn from phase 1 of the study (2007-2008)

- Activities of undergraduate consultancy students at Middlesex University Business School (an internationally renowned institution that attracts students from four corners of the globe).

#### Why this research focus?

- Ongoing hostilities among culturally diverse teams of students (comprising of 4-8 individuals of mixed gender, age, and ethnicity).

#### Ensuing impact

- Complaints of lack of respect, or disrespect that stifled team development, led to poor quality work, and put pressure on tutors.

**The work conducted with the students** was to illuminate and support their emotional awareness for gaining greater understanding of their meaning of respect from their differing cultural perspectives.



## 4. Overview of the Paper



**“Respect for Cultural Diversity in a Global Society:  
Promoting International Harmonious Working Relationships”**

**Doirean Wilson, Dr Mary Hartog, and Dr Philip Frame  
Middlesex University Business School**

**Globalisation has led to a more diverse workforce.** Together with the growing impact of equality legislation, this has created a need for greater understanding of the significance of respect in the context of culture. **But what are the implications for nurturing harmonious working relationships among those of difference in a 21<sup>st</sup> century society?**



## 5. What is respect?



As acknowledged by Prestwich and Lalljee (2009), “there have been varied definitions and a range of antecedents of respect identified within the literature”, thus rendering it a contested term.

For example, Palmer-Jones and Hoertdoefer, (2008) define respect as being **“a way of feeling and a way of behaving”**, while Cohen (2001) describe respect as being **“a sentiment of one individual toward another”**.

Although respect is a commonly used in society, **“its determinants and consequences on group-related factors are unclear”** (Prestwich and Lalljee (2009)).

**Our working definition** utilises those aspects of respect which foreground **“regard” and “esteem” with a focus on respect for `others`** that is, `treat others how you would like to be treated yourself` .



## 6. A Review of Literature



- A review of literature identified several definitions of respect, which according to Cohen (2001):
- **“is a sentiment of one individual toward another”** and as such is of a reciprocal nature which Prado (2006) believes that:
- **“this reciprocity is the essence of a multicultural society”** and that “without it all that happens is that different groups’ cultural values and practices are more tolerated than respected by others”.
- **Tolerance however, does not mean an acceptance** of those of difference. The research suggests that this would depend on greater understanding and awareness.

# 7. Developments in Diversity Thinking



- **The work of Culik and Roberson (2008)** which focuses on the **ASK** framework that seeks to analyse diversity education in terms of **A**ttitude, **S**kills, and **K**nowledge; is relevant to this paper. This is because it offers an evaluation of diversity education in academic and organisation settings, and as such, helps to exemplify the research findings.
- Our research builds on Culik and Roberson (2008) traditional **ASK** framework by incorporating the **E**motional sphere of learning (Frame, 2009).
- **The work of Chavez and Wesinger (2009)** is also relevant to this research, as they explore the approach of creating a learning space for cultural inclusion. They emphasise that managing for diversity as opposed to managing diversity can make for a longer term strategic and more inclusive approach to the `culture of diversity`.



## Cont.



- Chavez and Wesinger (2009) approach has three objectives:
  - **1. Establishing a relational culture in which people can feel proud**
  - **2. Maintaining an inclusive culture in which people are motivated**
  - **3. Incorporating an organisational strategy that capitalises on the multiple perspectives individuals contribute**

## 8. Methodology



- **Qualitative, collaborative action research** approach to inquiry
- **Two focus groups, comprising of up to eight volunteer students** each, per phase (of which there are two)
- **Weekly or fortnightly sessions** lasting 30 minutes or an hour over 24 weeks of the modules life
- **The students managed sessions**, deciding what should be discussed with regards to respect etc.
- **Each session was audio-video recorded.** The students opted to view the recorded sessions after the last focus group meeting.

## 9. Phase 1 (2007-2008) Findings



- Feedback from **diversity introductory team exercise**
- From what students' wrote in their **individual learning review essays (one of the module assessments)**
- Audio-visual **video recorded focus group sessions**



# Cultural Diversity Team Introduction Exercise

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*Each team member introduces themselves to the class confirming:*

*their name and cultural origin*

**Then**

*Identify **two positive**, and then **one negative cultural stereotype associated with your race, culture or ethnicity** that you would be comfortable to share, before stating the reality.*



# Feedback from diversity introductory team exercise



## (Cultural awareness/Stereotypes)

- “This workshop opened my eyes in a way that it taught me about other cultures, and possible stereotypes. The most intriguing part of the exercise was that, during the cultural awareness introductory presentations, it was no surprise to see other students of so many ethnic minorities or cultures who weren’t White British, stereotyped as being some sort of criminal, or as being involved in some sort of criminal or terrorist act, which is very disrespectful, but at least this presentation helped us to address this without feeling embarrassed.”

**Second Generation male Asian Indian student**



# Findings from individual review essays



## (Attitude/Emotions)

“Developing a positive attitude within the group made me learn that everyone respected each other and we were able to work together constructively and effectively. Each member was creative with different ideas and this made us use our time efficiently for the completion of the project.”

**First generation male Nigerian student**





# The first phase of this study (2007-2008) identified ten themes that emerged from the students' stories of respect and disrespect



- **Perception/Knowledge** (insight based on assumptions, wisdom and understanding)
- **Attitude** (approach based on outlook). “If I disagree with anyone, they automatically assume I’m arguing with them so become defensive.” **Male east African student.**
- **Feelings – Emotions** “When I saw myself on the video in discussion, I could not believe the way I was behaving. I was talking over others and was very loud which was embarrassing”. **Male east African student.**
- **Cultural beliefs about others** (based on things learnt about cultural difference) “At first, I didn’t want to talk about my background, because I thought other people would think it was boring, especially when they come from more exotic places than me”. **Female white British student**
- **Stereotype** – Perception/Knowledge. “I always thought the reason why you never hear Chinese people getting attacked in the streets, is because everyone thinks they’re all good at Kung Fu, so you gotta give them respect for that.” **Male east African student.**
- **Skill** (ability to do something as a result of something else). **Our findings suggest that skill is an emergent outcome of this research**, and is implicit in the learning and enquiry process that our students are individually and collectively engaged. Such as their ability to reflect, argue and write more eloquently. It was also evident that the students became benevolent towards each other.



# Conclusions



## That respect is:

- culturally situated
- Is a common value
- Is synonymous with identity
- The student agreed that respect should be reciprocal
- Respect can be used as an intervention tool for promoting cultural awareness and respect for those of difference



**Thank you for listening  
to this presentation**

**Any questions**



**Middlesex  
University**

