

Gender And Cross-Cultural Perceptions Of Professors' Behaviors: A Comparison Of Chinese And American College Students

Elizabeth Stork, Robert Morris University, USA

Nell T. Hartley, Robert Morris University, USA

ABSTRACT

A gender and nationality comparison study of Chinese students in China and American students in the U.S. (N = 405) was conducted to explore perceptions about potentially offensive behaviors of professors in the college classroom using the Student Perceptions of Professors' Classroom Behaviors (SPPCB). Within-country and between-country comparisons were made, as well as within gender and between genders. Three main professor behavior domains were competence, interest and teacher immediacy, and offensiveness. American females judged behaviors significantly more offensive than did Chinese females, with American males and Chinese males in between. Chinese male and female students expect dignified and competent behavior from professors, while American male and female students expect respectfulness, opportunity, and an engaging environment. Several individual behaviors were significantly different between each of the paired groups.

Keywords: Perceptions; Professor Behaviors; Chinese Students; Gender Differences; Teacher Immediacy; Cross-Cultural Comparisons

INTRODUCTION

Professors in American universities are more likely than ever to encounter students from a wide range of cultural, ethnic, national, and linguistic orientations, given the increasing numbers of international students in American universities. Cultural differences by nation-type are but one slice of the variations in students; gender differences by nation-type also will influence, both overtly and subliminally, interactions between professors and students, as well as students' expectations of professors. It is not difficult to accept the premise that Chinese students in Chinese college classrooms and American students in American college classrooms react and respond differently to their professors and perceive professors' classroom behaviors differently. Cultural differences regarding the roles of student and teacher, the foundations of and values about education, attitudes about respect for others, including elders, and deeply rooted collective philosophical and environmental orientations are just a few of the many possible explanations. In a previous paper, variations between Chinese and American students' perceptions of professors' behaviors that the students might find offensive (Stork & Hartley, 2011) were explored. This paper examines differences in American and Chinese college students' perceptions by gender on one measure.

A good deal of research has been conducted on student perceptions and satisfaction with various teacher behaviors, consistently suggesting that those that interfere with learning (such as rushing through classes, failing to provide sufficient feedback, boring lectures, tests, and assignments that are too hard or too easy) affect student motivation and engagement, and often their achievement and satisfaction (Kearney, Plax, Hays, & Ivey, 1991; Stork & Hartley, 2009, 2011). Poor communication efforts and skills, lack of empathy, and failing to attend to disruptions and bad behavior by students have been noted as problematic for students (Boice, 1998; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). Ultimately, poor professor behaviors can be categorized into three dimensions: 1) incompetence as educators, 2) lack of interest - or "indolence" - (Kelsey, Kearney, Plax, Allen, & Ritter, 2004), and 3) offensiveness/incivility.

Very little research explores how males and females perceive behaviors, although copious research studies the effect of the gender of the authority figure on subordinates and students.

Exploring the effect of gender on perceptions is exceedingly difficult because predicting how males and females perceive things is wildly dependent on other, more determining attributes. Age, education, occupation, family, experiences, and cultural dimensions are far more strong determinants on what and how people believe about things. Gender attitudes are particular, not universal, especially in the West. Collectivism-individualism and the masculine-feminine socially determined roles and expectations, as well as age and experiences, are probably far more instrumental in explaining some gender differences in perceptions. Gender roles are fairly conventional in masculine societies, reinforced by family, schools, media, and, often, the workplace (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). The masculine-feminine dimension is the only one in which genders differed decisively enough to measure in the IBM studies of Hofstede and this dimension was the most controversial. Hofstede et al. (2010) use the terms “tough” and “tender” to explain masculinity and femininity as a cultural dimension. They asserted that a national masculinity - while applied to societies, not individuals - means that fewer people in that society will hold feminine values than will in feminine societies. Men will have higher masculinity scores, but women’s will not be far behind. As people age, the gap shrinks until, for both, it disappears after about age 45. For this study, then, gender differences between Chinese and American college students in their early twenties were explored, expecting traditional masculine - “tough” - expectations for behaviors of authority figures would bear out. Hofstede’s theories about national dimensions, particularly collectivism-individualism and masculine-feminine, and their strength in young adults, form the basis for our research questions.

Gender Differences between China and the U.S.

Roles and beliefs about gender have shifted considerably in the last half century, especially in countries where women’s participation is necessary for economic development. Beliefs about the behaviors of others are difficult to construe by gender; they depend on socialization by many individuals and groups. Gender roles and gender role models differ widely in individualist cultures, less in collectivist cultures. Masculine behaviors and feminine behaviors are socially determined and each culture has those it has deemed appropriate for males and females. Males, in most traditional and modern societies, are expected to be strong, assertive, self-reliant, competitive, protective, performance oriented, and dominant outside the home, and most females are expected to be nurturing, relational, cooperative, conscious of their appearance, emotional, and concerned about the “living environment” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 138) and quality of life. China is considered collectivist and masculine; the U.S. is considered individualist and masculine; masculine cultures tend to value a teacher’s brilliance and reputation; and feminine cultures tend to value social skills (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Many young American women in the U.S., especially educated women, are likely to believe that power should be distributed equally, that access to opportunity should be based on merit, that their individual contributions should matter, that jobs and pay should not be influenced by gender, and that family responsibilities should be shared with men. Women believe these “shoulds” but are aware that they are not always practiced. Ambitious, assertive, performance-oriented women are not highly regarded in most circles. Young Chinese women are products of a complex interweaving of modern values of gender equity, officially, and the experienced reality of a strong patriarchal and paternalistic culture (Gang & Guiyang, 2000). Increasingly present in higher education and in the workforce, they tend to show a lack of confidence in their ability despite overcoming great competition to obtain a place in the university. They believe males are superior. Gang and Guiyang also suggest that Chinese females are diligent and disciplined but have a strong desire to affiliate, be understood and loved, which is one motivation toward being sensitive toward the actions of others.

American men, primarily educated younger men, exposed to women in vastly more roles than their older counterparts, are likely to share the beliefs of young women but may be less concerned with unequal power relationships than are women, be more independent, less aware of how women’s pay and opportunities lag behind men’s, and value and expect competitiveness between themselves, but not much in women. Chinese college males appear to need affiliation less than their female counterparts, therefore more able to become independent (Gang & Guiyang, 2000). They also have a stronger need to achieve than do most Chinese college women.

National Differences between China and the U.S. on Education

It is commonly accepted that the Chinese, as a people tend not to question authority and they value and strive for harmonious relationships, preservation of face, and for conservation of existing structures, whether male or female. Higher education is undertaken to prepare them to do good for the state and society. American students, generally speaking, tend to value individual expression and competition and expect their rights to be served; education is sought to prepare them for well-paying jobs and put them ahead of the competition, also without major differences between the genders. While Chinese men and women may strive to have control over their emotions, be less self-oriented and more considerate of others (Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006), as well as to value “obedience, conformity, and cooperation” (p. 85), American men and women believe that economic and social independence and the ability to make their own decisions about what they want to do is central (Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006; Shkodriani & Gibbons, 1995).

Each individual has a role to fulfill, as well as responsibilities to that role, in hierarchical societies such as China (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). Teachers’ high status as role models - authority figures who expect conformity and obedience and who function as transmitters of knowledge to the larger society, with life-long impact on students (Hui, 2005) – means that they are supposed to demonstrate competence, engagement, and virtue in their ongoing relationships with students (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). The Chinese value a dignity that is gained “by behaving appropriately in relationships, ...likely the most pervasive feature of Chinese culture” (Koehn & Leung, 2008, p. 480). Differences of opinion can disturb social harmony and cost the antagonist a loss of dignity, so too can professors who are not serious and self-controlled and appear incompetent or careless (Koehn & Leung, 2008). Americans believe human beings have an innate dignity that cannot be conferred nor taken away by anyone else, only lost by one’s actions. As an individual characteristic, it is demonstrated by acting rationally, consistently, and autonomously. Professors who act irrationally and inconsistently, either compared to themselves or to others in their profession, may have less value in the eyes of students who expect a degree of authority and competence from them (Koehn & Leung, 2008).

Because of large power distance in China, teacher-student inequality parallels parent-child inequality, the classroom is teacher-centered, strictly ordered, and communications are initiated by the teacher (Hofstede et al., 2010). Complaining or even acknowledging inappropriate behavior by a professor who is an authority figure, thereby causing conflict or shame (Chan, Tang, & Chan, 1999), would be less likely to occur than it would in small power distance cultures such as the U.S. Chinese teachers solve students’ problems to reinforce their roles, tend to be strict, and expect attentiveness; Chinese students tend not to attribute their lack of success to teachers and do not expect open discussions with them for fear of implying that the teacher did not teach effectively (Hui, 2005). In small power-distance U.S., the classroom is student-centered; teachers appreciate and encourage student initiative, fulfilling the goal of progress toward independent thinking (Hofstede et al., 2010). Students, especially those in college, expect to be treated, more or less, as equals, whose needs, rights, and selves are to be respected like the teachers’. Students often feel free to complain to and about teachers. Deference is not likely to be shown.

In the college classroom, Chinese students expect to maintain a formal atmosphere and a respectful physical distance from the professor. They respond to authority figures who lecture and tell them specifically what they need to know and who call them by their full names. Chinese students are more modest than American students - reluctant to embarrass or offend peers and teachers (Chan, 1999). American students, on the other hand, expect a more casual environment in which they are called by their first names, are invited to participate and usually are permitted to challenge the professor’s ideas, and are encouraged to think creatively about the topic under discussion.

Zhang and Oetzel (2006) explored teacher immediacy (the extent to which “communication behaviors enhance closeness and reduce physical and/or psychological distance between communicators” (p. 218)) among Chinese students, finding three types - instructional, relational, and personal. This differed from Western students’ perceptions, which coalesced around one construct - “task-oriented professional educational values” (p. 233) or instruction. Chinese students assume teachers educate the whole person. Instructional immediacy has to do with patience, accountability, commitment to teaching, and a passion for teaching, whereas non-immediacy behaviors, include being unprepared, irresponsible, and boring. Relational immediacy is demonstrated by caring and concern for the student; “relational nonimmediacy” (p. 229), on the other hand, is evident when teachers play favorites, show

lack of respect, or harm students. Finally, personal immediacy has to do with the personal characteristics of the instructor such as being moral, approachable, self-sacrificing (Hui, 2005), having a personality, and being competent as a teacher, with deep subject knowledge and as a social role model (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The design for this research was correlational to determine whether a significant relationship existed between national culture and gender and perceptions about professors' potentially offensive behaviors. Survey data from a previous study were analyzed to compare the strength of association between gender and nationality in two samples of college students - one from China and one from the U.S. - on a measure of professor classroom behaviors. Four pairs of student groups were compared - American females and males, Chinese females and males, American males and Chinese males, and American females and Chinese females. The research question was, "What is the relationship between gender and perceptions of the offensiveness of professor behaviors among American and Chinese college students?" Scores on perceptions about professor behaviors can be predicted by gender and nationality.

Participants

Chinese undergraduate business students from a regional university near an urban area in China completed a survey administered by a professor on the faculty of that university. American undergraduate business majors from a comparably sized university near an urban area in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. also were given the survey. The two independent groups that formed the study sample (N = 405) included 260 American and 145 Chinese students. Of the Chinese, 31% were male and 68% were female, in the age range of 18-24 (M = 20.1), and consisting of 54% freshman and 46% juniors. Of the American students, 64% were male and 35% were female, in the age range of 19-25 (M = 21.2), and consisting of 9% sophomores, 54% juniors, and 37% seniors.

Instrument

The Student Perceptions of Professors' Classroom Behaviors (SPPCB) was used to measure perceptions about classroom behaviors of professors that students may or may not find offensive. This is a 50-item survey, developed by the authors in 2008 from focus groups (see Stork & Hartley, 2009), in which 50 items are rated following the question: "How offensive do you think it is when professors..." Behaviors included "cutting a student off," "reading from power point slides," "appearing unprepared," "singling out a student," and "embarrassing a student." Response categories range from 1 = "not at all offensive" to 5 = "very offensive." The American version of the instrument has a reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of .96; the Chinese version reliability was assessed at .97. These data were treated as quantitative data for which means and standard deviations as measures of central tendency were used.

Procedures

A Chinese professor on the faculty at the American university translated the SPPCB survey into Chinese, keeping the English as well for a Chinese/English version; Chinese students could read the statements in both Chinese and English. It was emailed to the professor at the Chinese university who printed and administered the paper instrument in class. In the U.S., the survey was administered by one of the authors, also in class. Both groups of students were able to complete the survey, which involved circling a number from 1 to 5 corresponding to the perception of the student for each phrase in the list of 50 behaviors, in 5-7 minutes. In China, the surveys were collected and mailed to the authors and in the U.S., the administrating author collected the surveys from the participants when completed. The study was IRB approved.

Data Analysis

A total score for each respondent was calculated, the total data set was reduced by 79 records (15%) for a total of 405, and surveys with extreme scores were eliminated. The range was 50 to 250, with a score of 50 (of which there were five) indicating that the respondent selected "1" for every item, and 250 (of which there were

none) indicating a selection of “5” on every item. Incomplete surveys were also excluded because they could not obtain a comparable total score. Two predictor variables were nationality and gender. The outcome variable was the summed scale score of the Student Perceptions of Professors’ Classroom Behaviors (SPPCB) for each student as well as 50 individual scores for each item. Group means by nationality and gender were compared on the total score of SPPCB and on the scores on each item using an independent samples t-test. Means were also compared on each of the 50 individual items.

RESULTS

American females perceived the items rating potential professors’ behaviors as more offensive than did any other group. American males followed, with Chinese males then Chinese females. Table 1 presents the items’ means comparison by nationality and gender - the American female-male comparison (A) and the Chinese female-male comparison (B).

Table 1: Comparing Means - American Females and Males, Chinese Females and Males

A. Means for American Students (1-5)		Professor Behaviors	B. Means for Chinese Students (1-5)	
Female	Male		Female	Male
4.48**	4.16	Humiliating, intimidating students	3.20	3.47
4.46***	3.70	Hitting on a student	3.03	3.36
4.37**	4.04	Not helping students when assignments or tasks are unclear to them	2.89	3.02
4.26*	3.99	Punishing the entire class for one/few students' misbehavior/performance	3.34	3.18
4.18	4.02	Not answering a student's question, but referring him/her to course materials	2.80	3.16
4.18***	3.69	Embarrassing a student	2.88	3.18
4.08	3.91	Keeping the class overtime	2.59	2.87
4.07***	3.52	Talking about a student who is not present	2.58	2.87
4.07***	3.41	Commenting on a student's looks	2.98	3.29
4.00*	3.75	Playing favorites	2.70	3.11
3.85*	3.35	Not giving students feedback	2.69	3.07
3.80***	3.41	Cutting a student off	2.33	2.69
3.77**	3.36	Using a student or a student's work as a negative example	2.53	2.53
3.76*	3.47	Appearing to have arbitrary rules	2.89	2.98
3.73***	3.20	Not correcting student misbehavior/rudeness	2.46	2.98*
3.68***	2.67	Dressing inappropriately	2.18	2.31
3.63*	3.33	Not grading assignments in a timely manner	2.53	2.36
3.57*	3.25	Singling a student out	2.38	2.58
3.51	3.35	Starting class early	2.21	2.64
3.48	3.08	Appearing unprepared for class	2.58	2.67
3.34*	3.02	Not appropriately advising a student	2.84	2.84
3.33	3.17	Being very authoritative	2.83	3.00
3.33	2.86	Appearing disorganized	3.05	2.73
3.26**	2.82	Talking on a cell phone	2.21	2.84
3.26	2.78	Cancelling class without prior notice	2.64	2.96
3.20	2.84	Coming late to class	2.21	2.51
3.12	2.82	Not calling on students who raise their hands/offer to respond	2.67	3.31*
3.12	2.82	Calling on the same student repeatedly	2.53	2.87
3.09	2.85	Talking too fast or slow	2.33	2.49
3.07*	2.72	Changing assignments and due date	2.37	2.78
3.05	3.11	Not making the class interesting	3.14	3.09
3.00***	2.38	Inflating grades	2.44	2.76
3.00*	2.67	Being very permissive	2.36	2.69
2.89***	2.39	Reading power point slides	2.98	2.87
2.85	2.56	Not making eye contact with students	2.32	2.56
2.83	2.70	Not talking loudly enough or talking too loudly	2.60	2.49
2.80	2.64	Calling on unprepared student	2.60	2.49

Table 1 cont.

2.79	2.57	Not having sanctions for bad behavior/non-attendance/non-performance	2.30	2.80*
2.79**	2.38	Reading lecture notes to the class	3.01	3.04
2.43	2.16	Sitting behind a desk while teaching	1.80	1.89
2.41	2.15	Wandering off topic	2.32	2.20
2.39	2.43	Lecturing the entire class period	2.55	2.60
2.39	2.12	Leaving classroom during class	1.99	2.09
2.38	2.14	Eating while teaching	2.21	2.47
2.38	1.98	Offering strong opinion	2.34	2.56
2.21	2.07	Giving too much feedback or criticism	1.90	2.18
2.03**	1.53	Swearing	2.86	3.33
1.84	1.85	Talking about his/her personal life	2.20	2.62
1.35	1.21	Ending class early	1.67	2.00
1.16	1.15	Drinking a beverage while teaching	1.56	1.73

Note: Higher means are in boldface. *** $p < .0001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Gender Differences within Nationalities - Americans

The difference in perceptions about the offensiveness of all professor behaviors tested (maximum possible score of 250) between American females ($M = 160.16$, $SD = 29.0$, $n = 92$) and American males ($M = 143.65$, $SD = 30.32$, $n = 165$) was significant, as indicated by an independent samples t-test, $t(255) = -4.25$; $p = .000$. As shown in Table 2, the effect size was moderate (mean difference = 16.5, CI: -24.16 to -8.46; eta squared = .07).

Table 2: Comparison of Gender within Nationality on Total SPPCB Score (Range 50-250)

Nationality	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
American	Male	165	143.65	30.32	-4.25	.000***
	Female	92	160.16	29.00		
Chinese	Male	45	137.04	42.16	1.32	.190
	Female	99	126.45	45.89		

*** $p < .0001$

American males rated only two professor behaviors as more offensive, by means, than did females; however, the differences were not statistically significant. All but two of the remaining 48 behaviors were rated as more offensive by American females, with 24 of these being statistically significant (refer to Table 1).

Gender Differences within Nationalities - Chinese

For Chinese students, the overall difference in perceptions about offensiveness of professor behaviors between males ($M = 137.04$, $SD = 42.16$; $n = 45$) and females ($M = 126.45$, $SD = 45.89$; $n = 99$) was not significant, $t(142) = 1.32$; $p = .190$ (refer to Table 2). Chinese males and females did not differ strongly in their perceptions about the offensiveness of specific professors' behaviors, although males perceived them as somewhat more offensive; but these were not statistically significant differences.

Chinese males rated only three statistically significant ($p < .05$) behaviors as more offensive than their female counterparts: 1) not having sanctions/punishments for student bad behavior/non-attendance/non-performance, 2) not calling on students who raise their hands/offer to respond, and 3) not correcting student misbehavior/rudeness. Chinese females judged eight behaviors as slightly more egregious than did the Chinese males. These differences are noted by a difference in means, but they were not statistically significant (refer to Table 1).

Gender Differences between Nationalities - Females

American females scored overall offensiveness of professors' behaviors significantly higher ($M = 160.16$, $SD = 29.0$; $n = 92$) than did Chinese females ($M = 126.45$, $SD = 45.89$; $n = 99$), $t(167.08) = 6.11$, $p = .000$. As shown in Table 3, the effect size was large (mean difference = 33.71, CI: 22.82 to 44.59; eta squared = .2).

Table 3: Comparison of Gender between Nationalities on Total SPPCB Score (Range 50-250)

Gender	Nationality	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	American	165	143.65	30.32	1.18	.329
	Chinese	45	137.04	42.16		
Female	American	92	160.16	29.00	6.11	.000**
	Chinese	99	126.45	45.89		

*** p < .0001

American female students, compared with Chinese females, deemed 42 behaviors as more offensive - 36 with significant difference from the Chinese students. As shown in Table 4, Chinese females perceived only eight items more potentially egregious - four that were statistically significant: 1) lecturing the entire class period, 2) talking about his/her personal life, 3) swearing, and 3) ending class early.

Table 4: Comparing Means: American Females with Chinese Females

Professor Behaviors	American Females	Chinese Females
Humiliating, intimidating students	4.48***	3.20
Hitting on a student	4.46***	3.03
Not helping students when assignments or tasks are unclear to them	4.37***	2.89
Punishing the entire class for one/few students' misbehavior/performance	4.26***	3.34
Not answering a student's question, but referring him/her to course materials	4.18***	2.80
Embarrassing a student	4.18***	2.88
Keeping the class overtime	4.08***	2.59
Talking about a student who is not present	4.07***	2.58
Commenting on a student's looks	4.07***	2.98
Playing favorites	4.00***	2.70
Not giving students feedback	3.85***	2.69
Cutting a student off	3.80***	2.33
Using a student or a student's work as a negative example	3.77***	2.53
Appearing to have arbitrary rules	3.76***	2.89
Not correcting student misbehavior/rudeness	3.73***	2.46
Dressing inappropriately	3.68***	2.18
Not grading assignments in a timely manner	3.63***	2.53
Singling a student out	3.57***	2.38
Starting class early	3.51***	2.21
Appearing unprepared for class	3.48***	2.58
Not appropriately advising a student	3.34**	2.84
Being very authoritative	3.33**	2.83
Appearing disorganized	3.33	3.05
Cancelling class without prior notice	3.26**	2.64
Talking on a cell phone	3.26***	2.21
Coming late to class	3.20***	2.21
Not calling on students who raise their hands/offer to respond	3.12**	2.67
Calling on the same student repeatedly	3.12***	2.53
Talking too fast or slow	3.09***	2.33
Changing assignments and due date	3.07***	2.37
Not making the class interesting	3.05	3.14
Inflating grades	3.00**	2.44
Being very permissive	3.00***	2.36
Reading power point slides	2.89	2.98
Not making eye contact with students	2.85**	2.32
Not talking loudly enough or talking too loudly	2.83**	2.60
Calling on unprepared student	2.80	2.60
Reading lecture notes to the class	2.79	3.01
Not having sanctions for bad behavior/non-attendance/non-performance	2.79**	2.30
Sitting behind a desk while teaching	2.43***	1.80
Wandering off topic	2.41	2.32

Table 4 cont.

Lecturing the entire class period	2.39	2.55
Leaving classroom during class	2.39*	1.99
Offering strong opinion	2.38	2.34
Eating while teaching	2.38	2.21
Giving too much feedback or criticism	2.21*	1.90
Swearing	2.03	2.86***
Talking about his/her personal life	1.84	2.20**
Ending class early	1.35	1.67**
Drinking a beverage while teaching	1.16	1.56***

Note: Higher means are in boldface. *** $p < .0001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Gender Differences between Nationalities - Males

The overall difference between American males ($M = 143.65$, $SD = 30.32$; $n = 180$) and Chinese males ($M = 137.04$, $SD = 42.16$; $n = 45$) was not significant, $t(56.99) = 1.18$, $p = .329$. Chinese and American males did not differ in their perceptions about the offensiveness of professor behaviors (refer to Table 3).

On particular behaviors, American male students deemed 29 professor behaviors as potentially offensive - 15 significantly different than did the Chinese males. Of the 17 behaviors that Chinese males perceive as more offensive than American males, six were statistically significant: 1) reading power point slides, 2) reading lecture notes to the class, 3) offering a strong opinion, 4) talking about his/her personal life, 5) swearing, and 6) ending class early (refer to Table 5).

Table 5: Comparing Means - American Males with Chinese Males

Professor Behaviors	American Males	Chinese Males
Humiliating, intimidating students	4.16**	3.47
Not helping students when assignments or tasks are unclear to them	4.04***	3.02
Not answering a student's question, but referring him/her to course materials	4.02***	3.16
Punishing the entire class for one/few students' misbehavior/performance	3.99***	3.18
Keeping the class overtime	3.91***	2.87
Playing favorites	3.75***	3.11
Hitting on a student	3.70	3.36
Embarrassing a student	3.69*	3.18
Talking about a student who is not present	3.52**	2.87
Appearing to have arbitrary rules	3.47*	2.98
Commenting on a student's looks	3.41	3.29
Cutting a student off	3.41***	2.69
Using a student or a student's work as a negative example	3.36***	2.53
Not giving students feedback	3.35	3.07
Starting class early	3.35**	2.64
Not grading assignments in a timely manner	3.33***	2.36
Singling a student out	3.25**	2.58
Not correcting student misbehavior/rudeness	3.20	2.98
Being very authoritative	3.17	3.00
Not making the class interesting	3.11	3.09
Appearing unprepared for class	3.08*	2.67
Not appropriately advising a student	3.02	2.84
Appearing disorganized	2.86	2.73
Talking too fast or slow	2.85	2.49
Coming late to class	2.84	2.51
Calling on the same student repeatedly	2.82	2.87
Not calling on students who raise their hands/offer to respond	2.82	3.31
Talking on a cell phone	2.82	2.84
Cancelling class without prior notice	2.78	2.96
Changing assignments and due date	2.72	2.78

Table 5 cont.

Not talking loudly enough or too loudly	2.70	2.49
Being very permissive	2.67	2.69
Dressing inappropriately	2.67	2.31
Calling on unprepared student	2.64	2.49
Not having sanctions for bad behavior/non-attendance/non-performance	2.57	2.80
Not making eye contact with students	2.56	2.56
Lecturing the entire class period	2.43	2.60
Reading power point slides	2.39	2.87*
Inflating grades	2.38	2.76
Reading lecture notes to the class	2.38	3.04***
Sitting behind a desk while teaching	2.16	1.89
Wandering off topic	2.15	2.20
Eating while teaching	2.14	2.47
Leaving classroom during class	2.12	2.09
Giving too much feedback or criticism	2.07	2.18
Offering strong opinion	1.98	2.56**
Talking about his/her personal life	1.85	2.62***
Swearing	1.53	3.33***
Ending class early	1.21	2.00***
Drinking a beverage while teaching	1.15	1.73***

Note: Higher means are in boldface. *** p < .0001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

DISCUSSION

Clearly, individual experiences of students influence their perceptions of the learning environment, in general, and professors, in particular. This study presents evidence, however, that students from the U.S. and China tend to perceive professors behaviors in concert with their national cultures, to a large degree. Both groups have been raised in societies in which professors have status and authority, at least in the classroom. Both have expectations of role fulfillment – competence in classroom management and subject knowledge, and interest in educating students. Both countries' masculine cultures admire competence, success, and competition in the classroom. Differences occur in how teaching is done and what professors should do when interacting with students and performing their jobs. Results of this study are consistent with these social norms in both countries. Chinese students, members of a collectivist, large power distance culture, expect they will be educated to do good for and, increasingly, to do well in society, gain prestige, and expect preferential treatment to those who are deserving. They expect formality, strictness, and teacher-initiated learning, and immediacy on many levels, but also behaviors befitting a professor's life-long role as a model for moral, dignified, competent comportment. Behaviors that do not demonstrate these are deemed inappropriate, and even offensive, to Chinese students, causing a loss of face of the professor they would not want to risk.

American students, on the other hand, expect a more casual, student-centered, mutually-engaging learning environment with professors who share a challenging learning process with them, where conflict is part of the process and saving face is a weakness (Hofstede et al., 2010). However, they also have become more demanding of respect for their individuality and needs and expect behaviors that enable and offer this. They are also more sensitive to and judging of behaviors that infringe on their rights as human beings of more or less equal status, their innate worth, and their opportunities for success, also reflective of a small power distance and individualist culture.

Finding differences between the genders in each country was not unexpected; American male and female students showed an overall difference in perceptions and many individual differences, but Chinese male and female students did not. American males scored most behaviors as moderately potentially offensive, but somewhat lower than American females who felt that most behaviors were potentially more inappropriate or offensive. Compared with males, females judged the majority of behaviors strongly offensive, suggesting that competence, interest in students and teaching, and appropriate behaviors befitting a professor were demonstrated in the classroom. American females were critical of behaviors that did not respect students, enabled their self-expression, recognized their needs and individuality, and provided opportunities for them to demonstrate their attentiveness, learning, and

engagement. Chinese males were more disturbed than Chinese females by the loss of control in the classroom and not being given opportunities, such as invitations to speak. Fairness and harmony in such an environment is a moral and dignified behavior of a person with high status and authority. Chinese females and males scored lower overall and on all behaviors than American females and males. Chinese males, however, scored the offensiveness of some behaviors slightly higher than Americans indicating competence of the professor (reading lecture notes, ending class early) and dignified behavior (eating or drinking while teaching, swearing, talking about his/her personal life).

Striking findings, although also not unexpected, were between gender and across nationalities. Chinese and American male differences in perceptions, overall, were not significant, but American males deemed many more behaviors somewhat more inappropriate or offensive, by means, than Chinese males. This is not inconsistent with American sensitivity to individuality and respectfulness and to American small power distance. Differences that were significant were at the end of scale where American males had scored them very low, as not at all offensive. American females, however, judged potential professor behaviors as far more egregious than did Chinese females. Chinese females deemed potentially offensive professor behaviors of professors significantly less egregious than did American females, even on the highest scored items. While this is commonly explained as demonstrating a difference in female attitudes, socialization, opportunities, and sexism, it reflects a wide gap between Chinese and American females in expectations for treatment in the classroom.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

One limitation of the study was not knowing whether Chinese students, especially females, would risk scoring their professors on behaviors. Women tend to disclose feelings to intimate friends and family only (Chan, 1999), so it is possible that a young female's socialization might preclude honest appraisals of authority figures of high status. While the Chinese translation was done by a Chinese professor who also administered the survey, it is not certain that the words and phrases were perceived the same as they were in the U.S. Another limitation is the professor in the mind of the student while taking this survey. While students were instructed to think of professors in general, we do not know how universalist or particularist the image of professor was at the time of the survey. Gender, age, personality, recent experiences recalled, and vividness of the generalized professor could bias perceptions.

CONCLUSION

This study offers insights into how students think about how professors act – how they demonstrate competence in teaching, interest in educating, knowledge, and appropriate behavior befitting an authority figure, with a specific charge and role. While the study was conducted with Chinese students in China studying with Chinese professors, given the influx of Chinese students into American universities, the perceptions of Chinese students and their expectations may well transfer, at least to some degree, to American classrooms. American professors, knowing something about how Chinese students in their classrooms may perceive teacher immediacy, can explain reactions, and special attention might be given to encourage more assertive participation among Chinese students. Professors should be aware that American females are alert to types of behaviors that can negatively affect the learning environment, creating distance and lack of engagement.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Elizabeth Stork is Associate Professor at Robert Morris University's School of Communications and Information Systems, Department of Organizational Leadership. She earned her Ph.D. in Social/Non-Profit Administration from the School of Social Work, an M.A. in Sociology (Gender, Race, & Class), and an MSW also in Non-Profit Administration from the University of Pittsburgh, and a B.A. in The Classics from LSU. Stork currently teaches graduate courses in organizational leadership, decision making, and diversity. Her research interests include human universals in organizational contexts, student-faculty interactions, and developing/changing cognitions. She also conducts research and program evaluations for nonprofits in Western PA. E-mail: stork@rmu.edu (Corresponding author)

Nell Hartley is Professor of Management at Robert Morris University. In addition to teaching in the School of Business, she has taught in the Doctoral Program in Communication and Information Systems and in the Master's program in Educational Leadership. Her active involvement with international students occurs both in and outside of the classroom. She earned her Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Vanderbilt University. Her corporate experiences have been in Human Resource Management: Training and Development. Her publications focus on the development of Management History. Her research interests include conflict resolution, effective communication and classroom pedagogy. She often serves as a presenter and a facilitator for international conferences. She serves as an elected board member of the Society of Management Educators. E-mail: Hartley@rmu.edu

REFERENCES

1. Badger, S., Nelson, L., & Barry, C. (2006). Perceptions of the transition to adulthood among Chinese and American emerging adults. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 30*, 84-93.
2. Boice, R. (1998). Classroom incivilities. In K. A. Feldman & M. P. Paulsen (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in the classroom* (pp. 347-369). Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Publishing.
3. Chan, S. (1999). The Chinese learner – a question of style. *Education & Training, 41*(6/7), 294-304.
4. Chan, D., Tang, C., & Chan, W. (1999). Sexual harassment: A preliminary analysis of its effects on Hong Kong Chinese women in the workplace and academia. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 23*, 661-671.
5. Gang, C., & Guiyang, X. (2000). Gender differences in academic achievement and the educational implications. *Chinese Education and Society, 33*(2), 44-49.
6. Hirschy, A., & Braxton, J. (2004). Effects of student classroom incivilities on students. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 99*, pp. 67-76.
7. Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
8. Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
9. Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
10. Hui, L. (2005). Chinese cultural schema of education: Implications for communication between Chinese students and Australian educators. *Issues in Educational Research, 15*(1), 17-35.
11. Kearney, P., Plax, T., Hays, E., & Ivey, M. (1991). College teacher misbehaviors: What students don't like what teachers say and do. *Communication Quarterly, 39*, 239-252.
12. Kelsey, D., Kearney, P., Plax, T., Allen, T., & Ritter, K. (2004). College students' attributions of teacher misbehaviors. *Communication Education, 55*(1), 40-55.
13. Koehn, D., & Leung, A. (2008). Dignity in Western versus Chinese cultures: Theoretical overview and practical illustrations. *Business and Society Review, 113*(4), 477-504.
14. Shkodriani, G., & Gibbons, J. (1995). Individualism and collectivism among university students in Mexico and the United States. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 135*, 765-772.
15. Stork, E., & Hartley, N. T. (2009). Classroom incivilities: Students' perceptions about professors' behaviors. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research, 2*(4), 13-24.
16. Stork, E., & Hartley, N. T. (2011). A comparison of Chinese and American college students' perceptions of professors' behaviors *Journal of International Education Research, 7*(4), 1-10.
17. Zhang, Q., & Oetzel, J. (2006). Constructing and validating a teacher immediacy scale: A Chinese perspective. *Communication Education, 55*(2), 218-241.

NOTES