Understanding Each Other:

Perceptions of Accent and Authority among Classroom Instructors at Queen's University

Online Survey

Full Report

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

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"Everyone's accent is foreign to a certain percentage of the audience, as everyone has an accent."

Survey Respondent

Introduction

Everyone speaks with an accent.[1] The particular manner in which a person speaks is indicative of such factors as country/region of origin, culture and speech abilities and, past a certain age, one's accent is almost impossible to change.[2] Nevertheless, researchers have found that those who speak English as a first language are quick to detect the presence of foreignness in another's spoken English and may react negatively to the accents of persons whose first language is not English.[3] People may perceive certain "Englishes" as indicative of

[1] Rosina Lippi-Green (2012). *English With An Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States* (New York; Routledge). For Lippi-Green accent is comparative concept that typically distinguishes between native speakers of a language ("L1" speakers) and those who speak that language as a secondary language ("L2" speakers). Lippi-Green describes accent as merely "shorthand for variable language" and further, "When a native speaker of a language other than English learns English, accent is used to refer to the breakthrough of native language phonology into the target language." p. 46

[2] Yan Guo, "Can You Lose Your Accent in a Week?" *Language Learning Newsletter*, University of Calgary. Online: http://www.ucalgary.ca/languagelearning/canyouloseyouraccent retrieved 07/06/2011

[3] Murray J. Munro (2003). "A Primer on Accent Discrimination in the Canadian Context" *TESL Canada Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 39

less intelligence and competence and may be quick to dismiss certain manners of speech as unintelligible.[4] However, it has been determined that persons perceived to have strong accents may, in fact, be highly intelligible and that "an objection to accents on the grounds that they are unintelligible may sometimes have more to do with an unwillingness to accommodate differences in one's interlocutors than with genuine concern about comprehension."[5]

Issues of (un)intelligibility, bias and authority have serious implications for post-secondary instructors who are perceived to have accents by students and colleagues. In decisions around promotion of university instructors, there may be a presumption that pronounced accents naturally impair an instructor's ability to teach effectively.[6] Similarly, student evaluations of teachers who are perceived to have "low status" accents may betray a "rejection of the communicative burden", in effect, resistance toward the notion of verbal communication as an activity requiring effort on the part of both listener and speaker.[7] Like other North American post-secondary institutions, Queen's has not been immune to concerns that accent, combined with other axes of intersecting identity including race, place of origin, ancestry, gender identity, sexual identity and disability, plays a role in the treatment and

[4] Mari Matsuda cited in John F. Quinn and Joseph A. Petrick (1993), "Emerging Strategic Human Resource Challenges in Managing Accent Discrimination and Ethnic Diversity" *Applied H. R. M. Research*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 81
[5] Munro, *supra*, p. 40
[6] Kristina D. Curkovic (2000). "Accent and the University: Accent as Pretext for National Origin Discrimination in Tenure Decisions" *Journal of College and University Law*, Issue 4, Spring 2000, p. 732
[7] Rosina Lippi-Green cited in Kristina D. Curkovic, *supra*, p. 742

success of its instructors.[8] This study aimed to collect data about these concerns in a systematic manner and, ultimately, to better contextualize the issues through detailed information about how perceptions of accent affect Queen's educators.

Background to the Study

In 2009 a group of interested Queen's staff, students and faculty members came together to share knowledge of issues of accent bias and discrimination on campus.[9] Some members of the group had experienced accent discrimination firsthand; others had heard about these kinds of concerns anecdotally or had, by virtue of their role, been involved in assisting accented educators through formal or informal complaint resolution processes. The group, which came to refer to itself as the *Coalition Against Accent Discrimination* sought to address accent discrimination as a "pervasive, systemic, under-explored and often enormously consequential form of discrimination".[10] CAAD's primary objectives were to ensure the availability of supportive resources for accented educators and to raise awareness and promote respect for global Englishes. The collection of reliable data on issues of accent bias and discrimination was regarded as an important step toward anchoring a campaign that would

[8] Concerns about accent bias/discrimination as a possible barrier to educator success are familiar to unions and various service units at Queen's. See *Queen's Journal* article by Caitlin Choi, "Talking about communication: Students, faculty and administration discuss the topic of teachers with English as a second language" Online: http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2010-10-26/features/talking-about-communication/

[9] Interestingly, part of the backdrop to the formation of this group was extensive consultation around climate for racialized and other equity seeking groups through the work of the University's Diversity, Anti-Racism and Equity (DARE) committee.

[10] CAAD is no longer active.

promote understanding of the experiences of accented educators and the value they bring to the academic community.

In 2012, the *Understanding Each Other Research Team* formed to develop a study that would determine the nature and extent of accent bias and discrimination toward Queen's instructors.[11] Recognizing the range of possible responses to accent, the complex relationship between these responses and legally defined acts of discrimination, and wishing to capture the experiences of all teaching staff at Queen's, the team broadened the research topic from experiences of discrimination to experiences and perceptions of accent and authority in settings of instruction (e.g. the classroom). As such, the team decided that the survey component of the research would be open to all Queen's instructors, whether perceptibly accented or non-accented, while certain survey questions and all subsequent interviews would be directed toward self-identified accented instructors. The survey and interview questions were developed collaboratively among members of the original research team and the Human Rights and Equity Office staff, in consultation with Queen's researchers who voluntarily provided feedback and suggestions. The research data was, ultimately, collected and analyzed by Human Rights and Equity Office staff who assumed the role of principle investigators.

[11] The Understanding Each Other Research Group was made up primarily of representatives from the Human Rights and Equity Offices, PSAC 901 and the SGPS. Due to turnover in the student population, the group eventually disbanded, handing over administration of the project to the Human Rights and Equity Office with the understanding that the office would continue to consult with representatives from PSAC 901 and the SGPS.

Survey Logistics

In an effort to assess perceptions of accent and authority among classroom instructors at Queen's University, an on-line survey (Part I & Part II) was designed using FluidSurveys. Prior to finalizing the survey questions, feedback was solicited from key stakeholder groups and individuals on campus. Research ethics approval was received in January 2014 from the General Research Ethics Board (GREB). The survey was comprised of 31 questions (Part I). These questions were a combination of open and closed ended questions and yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. Within the survey, certain questions were hidden and only became visible and therefore available to survey respondents if they self-identified as accented. Upon completion of the Part I survey, respondents were automatically directed to Part II of this research project. In Part II, survey respondents, who self-identified as accented, were asked if they wanted to take part in a follow-up focus group session. Based on their responses, individuals were invited to attend a focus group. This report will address the findings from the Part I online survey portion of this research project.

In the context of this research the following understandings were provided to define the terms "educator" and "accent". In this research an "educator" was defined as someone who had teaching responsibilities in an academic department at Queen's University. Within this research "accent" referred to a pattern/manner of speech that is significantly different in sound from that most often heard in the local community. Accented English can be affected by such

things as having a first language other than English, one's country/region of origin, the presence of a disability that affects speech, etc.

At Queen's University a large proportion of educators are unionized workers (e.g. faculty, teaching fellows, teaching assistants, post-doctoral fellows and academic assistants). In an effort to reach a large proportion of educators at Queen's University, the decision was made to contact them via their respective labour organization listserves (Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA), Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC 901), and United Steele Workers (USW 2010-01). In total, educators at Queen's were contacted (via email) twice about participation in the survey[12]. These e-mails were sent out in April and May of 2015. In addition to these e-mails, information regarding the survey was posted in the QUFA Digest newsletter (May 2015), in the Society of Graduate and Professional Students' newsletter (April 2015) and on the QUFA and PSAC 901 websites and social media pages. The survey (Part I and II) was open on FluidSurveys from April 16, 2015 until July 6, 2015.

While the survey was open on FluidSurveys (April 2015-July 2015), a total of 128 completed and 36 partial and/or incomplete responses were collected for the Part I survey. In total there were 164 complete and incomplete responses to the Part I survey. As indicated in the letter of information, data provided as part of an incomplete survey will not be included

[12] In the case of educators who are part of QUFA, the second email regarding the survey was sent directly to their @queensu.ca email addresses. The second email was not sent via the QUFA listserv. Permission to send this second e-mail directly to faculty at Queen's was obtained from the Deputy Provost, Laeeque Daneshmend.

within this research report. Therefore, this report analyzes the 128 completed and unique survey responses (N=128). Within this research, the number of responses for individual questions varies because none of the fields were marked as mandatory.

Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents: Teaching Position, Number of Years Teaching, Gender, Ethnicity Self-Identification and English as a First Language

As part of the survey, educators were asked to identify their teaching position within the university. A wide variety of teaching positions were identified (see Table 1.1). In total, 41.7 % of respondents indicated that their teaching position was related to a tenure or tenure track faculty appointment. The second highest number of responses were from individuals who identified as teaching assistants (30.7%). Responses provided under the category of 'other' were represented in the options provided for this question. In addition, survey participants were asked to self-identify in terms of gender. 55.1% of survey respondents self-identified as female while 40.9 % self-identified as male (n=127). In addition to the options of male and female, survey respondents could choose not to identify within the gender binary (0.6%) or choose not to disclose information related to gender (3.1%).

Table 1.1 Teaching Positions – Survey Respondents (n=127)

Response	Chart	Percentage
Teaching Assistant		30.7%
Teaching Fellow		7.1%
Adjunct Faculty		11.0%
Tenure or Tenure Track Faculty		41.7%

Post-Doctoral Fellow		3.1%
Non-Renewable Faculty Member		0.8%
Special		2.4%
Academic Assistant		0.8%
Other, please specify...		2.4%

As part of the demographic profile of survey respondents it was important also to know how many years respondents had been educators at Queen's (rounding up). The number of years that survey respondents had been educators at Queen's varied greatly (n=125). Interestingly, the highest number of responses were from educators who indicated they had been teaching at Queen's for 20+ years (16%) and from those who indicated they had been teaching at Queen's for 1 year (17.6%) or 2 years (11.2%). These responses can be correlated with the most often selected teaching positions outlined above (tenure or tenure track faculty and teaching assistant).

In addition to information about survey respondents' teaching roles, it was integral to provide space for respondents to self-identify in relation to ethnicity and whether or not English was a first language. In response to the question of whether or not English was a respondent's first language, 73.2 % answered 'YES' and 26.8 % answered 'NO' (n=127). In total, 14.2% of survey respondents self-identified as a member of a racialized minority group in Canada (e.g. an individual who identifies as non-white in colour and non-Caucasian in origin) (n=127). Expanding upon this information, survey respondents were asked to describe their ethnicity.

Acknowledging the possibility of multiple overlapping identities respondents were encouraged to choose more than one ethnicity if applicable (Table see 1.2).

Table 1.2 Self-description of Ethnicity – Survey Respondents (n=126)

Response	Chart	Percentage
Chinese		4.0%
Filipino		0.0%
Japanese		0.0%
Korean		0.0%
Indigenous persons from outside North America		0.0%
South Asian/East Indian (e.g., Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian from India, East Indian from Guyana, Trinidadian, Sri Lankan, East African)		4.0%
South East Asian (e.g., Burmese, Cambodian/Kampuchean, Laotian, Malaysian, Thai, Indonesian, Vietnamese)		0.0%
West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Lebanese, Afghan)		2.4%
North African (e.g., Egyptian, Libyan)		0.0%
Arab		0.8%
Latin American (including indigenous persons from Central and South America)		1.6%
Métis		1.6%
Inuit		0.0%
North American Indian/First Nation		0.0%
African descent (e.g., African American, African Canadian, Caribbean...)		1.6%
European descent (e.g., British, Scottish, Irish, German...)		78.6%
Persons of mixed ancestry (with at least one parent in one of the groups listed here)		4.0%
Other, please specify...		5.6%

Perceptions of Authority and Accent among Educators – All Survey Respondents

The first part of the survey was open to all educators at Queen's University (e.g. those who self-identified as accented and those who did not). There were, however, questions within the survey which were hidden unless the respondent self-identified as someone who speaks with an accent (e.g. someone with a manner of speaking English that sounds significantly different from most people in the local community). In total, 24.4% of respondents self-identified as accented while 75.6% did not identify as accented (n=127). In this portion of the report, the focus will be directed at the responses from all surveyed educators (e.g. those who self-identified as accented and those who did not). Later in this report attention will be directed at the responses to specific questions from educators who self-identified as accented.

In an effort to gather information related to 'climate' at Queen's University, survey respondents were asked to state whether they believed there were accents spoken by educators at Queen's that were more likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative and if there were accents spoken by educators at Queen's that were less likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative. In both cases, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they believed there were accents spoken by educators at Queen's that afforded respect and authority while there were other accents which were less likely to be viewed as authoritative or respected. As a follow-up to this question respondents were asked to indicate the type(s) of accents which were more likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative and

those less likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative. The responses to these questions are too many to recount, but the most often cited responses are included below (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 Accent(s) and Perceptions of Authority/Respect

Accent(s) believed to MORE likely afford respect/viewed as authoritative (n=76)	Accent(s) believed to LESS likely afford respect/viewed as authoritative (n=85)
British	Chinese
Canadian (Ontario and Western Provinces)	Indian
Australian	Arabic
New Zealand	Japanese
Scottish	South American
Irish	African
American (Excluding Southern US)	Eastern European

Further investigating the climate at Queen's University, survey respondents were asked to discuss why they believed that certain accent(s) afforded educators respect/authority while others did not. Again, the responses to these questions are too numerous to recount in detail, but from these responses overarching themes did emerge. Below are a selection of reoccurring comments in response to the question of why certain types of accent(s) are more likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative.

“There is a culture in Canada that gives authority to British accents (whether explicitly or implicitly) likely because of imperial history. I believe there are mythologies of authenticity relegated to accents based on listeners' assumptions about the world. Many people assume authority based on the relationship between accent and content. “

“Prejudice on hearers' part likely to inflate the credibility of someone who "speaks white" with an accent heard as coming from somewhere intellectually prestigious, authoritative, or trustworthy. Connected to a prejudice in favour of "really white" Euro-speech.”

“Students with European ancestry (White students, who make up the majority of students here) seem to be more receptive to European accents because of pervading Eurocentrism and probably some racism too. It is also possible that they are more used to hearing European accents, and are better at understanding them.”

Serving a complementary purpose, survey respondents were asked to articulate why they believed that certain types of accent(s) were less likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative. Again, while the responses varied there were a number of common themes. What is revealed in the answers to this question are two distinct streams of responses. As a generality, respondents either suggested that certain types of accent(s) were less likely to be respected/viewed as authoritative because of difficulties in relation to “understandability” (stream 1) or because of prejudice and/or biases directly related to accent (stream 2). The tension between these two opposing streams is captured in the responses below.

Stream 1:

“I believe they are less respected or viewed as less authoritative based on how easily they can be understood by the students. If the students can't understand a person’s accent they may be less likely to respect them. “

"To my mind, it is not about an accent; it is about ability to communicate effectively to your listeners. Variations on English accents (e.g., Canadian, American, British etc.) are irrelevant. For that matter, if someone is fluently bilingual, his/her accent in English is irrelevant. But most people who have accents, have English as a second language and as a rule, they communicate less effectively in English than native English speakers. "

"I believe it is less the specific accent, as opposed to the level of English fluency on the part of the speaker and/or the ability for native Canadian/American English speakers to understand any accent in question. "

Stream 2:

"I believe that these accents are less likely to be respected due to inherent biases that exist within the student body. I would not characterize the student body as discriminatory, but rather unconscious of their biases towards those who speak with accents."

"Preconceived notions and assumptions about people. This is basically the root of racism. Some people have racialized opinions about people based on their accent. The question of "why" is massive. One short answer may be that Canadians are taught to respect Anglo-American-European accents because of a history of colonialism and imperial order. Conversely, we are taught to question any "other" accents outside that paradigm. There is a cultural will in the white, Anglo Canadian order that leans toward cultural homogeneity, which has racism at its core."

"I am not sure, but I can only speak from experience. I have had experience with two educators with these accents - people who are highly regarded academically - and there was less tolerance, less willingness to "bend an ear" by students and other academics. I experienced their comments as a form of racism."

"Because of unknown racism which exists in members of Queens University who have a feeling that all Caucasian trained countries are well trained and superior than most other countries of the world."

Reflected in these two streams are the broad ideas of individualism versus collectivism. In stream 1, respect/authority of accented educators is attributed to an individual's understandability. In stream 2, respect/authority of accented educators is associated with the views or conceptions of group status in North American society and as members of the Queen's community. It is important to note that these two distinctive and oppositional streams of thought can be found throughout the qualitative responses provided as part of this survey.

Profile of Self-identified Accented Educators at Queen's University

In this section of the report attention is directed towards the responses from educators at Queen's University who self-identified as accented. As previously mentioned, 24.4% of survey respondents self-identified as someone who speaks English with an accent. Although this is a small percentage of survey respondents, the answers provided, none-the-less, carry significant weight. One of the intended objectives of this research project was to provide a space and forum for the expression of all voices. Even one experience of discomfort, harassment or discrimination related to accent, is too many within the Queen's University community. Within the context of this research, it is important to discuss the concept of intersectionality[13]. Evident throughout survey responses was the way in which multiple

[13] The concept of "intersectionality" was originally developed by the Combahee River Collective. Intersectionality is focused on an "integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (Combahee River Collective as cited in Kolmar and Bartkowski 2010, 254). In this report attention is paid to the way in which compounding systems of oppression based on factors such as gender, race, sexuality, class, accent and citizenship impact the lives and everyday experiences of individuals.

overlapping identities were a factor in relation to accented educators' experiences and therefore reflected within their survey responses. In particular, a number of survey responses from accented educators, who self-identified as female, pointed to the intersections between accent and gender. In the context of this research project, it is important to identify and acknowledge the way in which experiences related to accent cannot be isolated from the multiple and intersecting identities which respondents embody. Included in Table 1.4 is a brief profile of survey respondents who self-identified as accented educators at Queen's University.

Central to this survey was the concept of communication as it relates to accented educators at Queen's University. Communication, in both small and large group settings, is a key component of being a university educator. In an effort to gauge communication strategies among accented educators, a series of questions were asked. Cognizant of differences between communicating with students and colleagues, two sets of questions were posed to educators. (See Table 1.5 & Table 1.6).

Table 1.4 Profile of Educators who Self-identified as Accented

Gender self-identification n=30	● Female – **70.0%** ● Male – **26.7%** ● I prefer not to disclose information pertaining to my gender – **3.3%**
Teaching Position n=30	● Tenure or Tenure Track Faculty – **45.2%** ● Teaching Assistant -**29.0%** ● Adjunct Faculty – **16.2%** ● Teaching Fellow – **3.2%** ● Post-Doctoral Fellow – **3.2%** ● Other – **3.2%**
Self-description of accent n=30	● Persian/Turkish ● British ● Southern European ● American (United States) ● Greek ● Chinese ● German ● African ● Indian/British ● Pakistani/Indian ● South American ● Iranian ● French Canadian ● Irish/Scottish ● French
How noticeable do you think your accent is to others? n=30	● Noticeable – **70.0%** ● Very noticeable/pronounced – **23.3%** ● Hardly Noticeable - **6.7%**
In what context do you feel your accent is most noticeable? (choose all that apply) n=31	● My accent is noticeable in all contexts – **71.0%** ● Giving lectures/public presentations – **51.6%** ● Conducting seminars – **41.9%** ● One-on-one discussions with students – **38.7%** ● One-on-one discussions with colleagues – **35.5%**

Table 1.5 Accented Educators and Communication with <u>Students</u>

Have you ever changed the way you interact/communicate with <u>students</u> because of your accent? (n=31)	• Yes – **35.5%** • No – **64.5%**
Changes made when interacting with <u>students</u> (choose all that apply) (n=11)	• Avoided verbal communication – **9.1%** • Used a 3rd party to help facilitate communication, increased reliance on written communication – **63.6%** • Increased reliance on software programs (e.g. PowerPoint, text to speech) – **36.4%** • Emphasized my accent (made it more noticeable) – **9.1%** • Slowed down my verbal communication - **81.8%** • Sped up my verbal communication – **0.0%** • Avoided written communication – **0.0%**

Table 1.6 Accented Educators and Communication with <u>Colleagues</u>

Have you ever changed the way you interact/communicate with <u>colleagues</u> because of your accent? (n=31)	● Yes – **29.0%** ● No – **71.0%**
Changes made when interacting with <u>colleagues</u> (choose all that apply) (n=9)	● Avoided verbal communication – **33.3%** ● Used a 3rd party to help facilitate communication – **0.0%** ● Increased reliance on written communication –**33.3%** ● Increased reliance on software programs (e.g. PowerPoint, text to speech) – **0.0%** ● Emphasized my accent (made it more noticeable) – **11.1%** ● Slowed down my verbal communication – **66.7%** ● Sped up my verbal communication – **11.1%** ● Avoided written communication – **0.0%**

Worth highlighting is the wide variety of techniques and strategies used by accented educators when interacting/communicating with students and colleagues. In both cases, the most often utilized technique was to slow down verbal communication when interacting with students and colleagues. As a follow-up to this question, respondents were asked to indicate

how they had attempted to alter their accent. Respondents were asked to select all that apply (see Table 1.7). In response to the 'other' option, respondents provided varied strategies including, significant preparation, adoption of local pronunciation and imitation of authoritative voices (i.e. men's voices).

Table 1.7 Strategies/Methods Used to Alter Ones Accent (choose all that apply) (n= 17)

Response	Chart	Percentage
Changed the speed of my communication		58.8%
Tried to imitate the speech of local speakers		64.7%
Sought informal coaching (e.g., from friends or colleagues)		29.4%
English as a second language classes (ESL)		11.8%
English conversation groups		5.9%
Accent reduction classes		0.0%
Other: Please Explain		23.5%

Experiences of Self-identified Accented Educators at Queen's University

As a complement to the 'climate' questions discussed above, survey respondents who self-identified as accented were asked a series of questions on perceptions/reactions related to accent. Designed to elicit overarching reactions to accent, self-identified accented educators were asked to describe, in general, reactions to their accent while at Queen's University (see Table 1.8). While the highest number of responses were from educators who felt that reactions to their accent had been positive (22.6%), a combined (32.3%) of respondents felt that reactions to their accents had generally been negative or somewhat negative (n=31). In

response to the 'other' option, multiple survey respondents stated that that reactions to their accents were neither positive nor negative. An analysis of this survey question begs the question of why - why do a number of accented educators at Queen's University feel that reactions to their accents have been negative or somewhat negative? The answer to this question is complex rather than singular and in the final portions of this report we will be begin to unpack many of the reasons why a number of accented educators at Queen's University identified reactions to their accents as either negative or somewhat negative.

Further gauging the first hand experiences of self-identified accented educators at Queen's University, survey respondents were asked to discuss whether or not they felt they spoke with a type of accent that is respected/viewed as authoritative at Queen's. In response to this question, 41.9% of respondents answered no, they do not feel they speak with an accent that is viewed as respected/viewed as authoritative at Queen's. Only 16.1% of respondents felt that they spoke with an accent that was respected/viewed as authoritative at Queen's, while another 41.9% were unsure (n=31).

Table 1.8 General Reactions to Accent (Self-Identified Educators) (n=31)

Response	Chart	Percentage
Very positive		6.5%
Positive		22.6%
Somewhat positive		19.4%
Somewhat negative		19.4%
Negative		12.9%
Very negative		0.0%
Other: Please Explain		19.4%

In connection with the questions discussed above, self-identified accented survey respondents were asked whether or not they had experienced harassment or discrimination at Queen's University because of their accent. Of the total 32 respondents, responses were fairly evenly split between those who indicated they had experienced harassment or discrimination at Queen's because of their accent and those who indicated they had not. In total, 56.2% of respondents indicated they had not experienced harassment or discrimination at Queen's because of their accent while 43.8% indicated they had. While the majority of respondents indicated they had not experienced harassment or discrimination related to their accent, a significant number of respondents reported the opposite. Even a singular case of discrimination or harassment related to accent should be cause for concern in the university context.

More troubling is the information revealed when an analysis of these numbers is done to determine which accented educators felt that they had experienced harassment or

discrimination at Queen's University because of accent. The results of this survey indicate that there are patterns in relation to both gender and ethnicity and experiences of harassment or discrimination. Of the educators who indicated having experienced harassment or discrimination based on accent, a higher proportion self-identified as female. Experiences of harassment or discrimination and their connection to gender identity were reinforced in the qualitative responses provided by survey respondents. Even more interesting to note, is the fact that the survey did not contain any questions which specifically asked respondents about perceptions of educator authority in relation to the educator's gender identity. Information provided by respondents was, therefore, completely spontaneous. It is this nature of the responses and their frequency which is notable. Connecting gender identity to perceptions of authority respondents stated:

"Accents most certainly affect students' perception of authority, and also affect faculty and admin's perceptions of others' authority in sharply negative ways. They are, I'm sure, related to a multiplicity of factors, including (most obviously) racism and classism. It may also be worthwhile investigating the perceived authority of men's voices vs. women's, and masculine vs. feminine voices."

"Sexism in the classroom and undermining the authority of younger women instructors equally if not more problematic on campus."

"Women's voices (tone, language, inflection) are not treated with respect. We are seen as shrill, emotional, and so on."

"It is hard to separate racism or sexism from accent, but I think they all go together."

In these responses, educators clearly articulate the intersecting forms of oppression related to perceptions of authority within the classroom. As discussed previously, in this research it is

paramount to identify, acknowledge and examine the way in which experiences related to accent are interconnected to multiple and intersecting identities.

It is interesting to note the correlation between experiences of harassment/discrimination related to accent, and particular ethnicities (see Table 1.9). When data related to self-identification of ethnicity and experiences of harassment or discrimination because of accent are correlated, distinct patterns emerge. As detailed in Table 1.9, the highest proportion of accented educators who did not feel that they had experienced harassment or discrimination because of accent were individuals who self-identified as being of European descent (55.6%). This result is particularly interesting when put in the context of the survey results outlined in Table 1.1, which discusses perceptions of respect/authority based on accent. As detailed previously within this report, the accents believed to more likely be afforded authority and respect included British, Scottish and Irish. When the results of this question are looked at in conjunction with one another, a pattern emerges which suggests that there are certain types of accents which are afforded more respect/authority and therefore less likely to lead to experiences of harassment or discrimination in the context of Queen's University.

As a reverse, Table 1.9 also showcases educators who have experienced harassment or discrimination because of accent in relation to their self-identified ethnicity. Although the highest proportion of educators who identified as having experienced harassment or discrimination because of accent self-identified as being from European descent an interesting trend emerges if you look at the results to this survey question as a whole. Further 14.3% of

individuals who self-identified as Chinese, South Asian/East Indian and West Asian indicated that they had experienced harassment or discrimination at Queen's University because of accent. While only a slightly higher number, 16.7% indicated they had not. These numbers in and of themselves are significant but when looked at in conjunction with the results captured in Table 1.1 an interesting trend emerges. In response to the question of which accents were believed to be afforded less respect/authority some of the most common responses were Chinese, Indian and Arabic. Again, individuals' perceptions of authority/respect in relation to accents and experiences of harassment or discrimination are directly correlated.

The connection between accent discrimination and/or harassment and an individual's ethnicity is further illuminated in the qualitative responses provided as part of this research. Related to this subject, respondents stated the following:

"In my view it is the person's ethnicity that has affected his/her accent to be disrespected as well."

"It is very difficult to separate out the issues of racism and accent discrimination, since the dominant accents I described earlier almost always belong to people who are or appear white, and it is very often people of colour who face accent discrimination. If we can deal with the culture of whiteness on campus, we will have gone a long way towards normalizing variation not only in appearance, but in manners of speech."

In both of these quotes, survey respondents point to the multifaceted and interconnected nature of harassment and/or discrimination associated with accent. In the view of these respondents, harassment and/or discrimination in relation to accent is a multidimensional phenomenon related to not only patterns of speech but also ones ethnicity.

Table 1.9 Self-Identification of Ethnicity Correlated with Experiences of Harassment or Discrimination at Queen's because of Accent (n=32)

Self-Identification of Ethnicity	Have Experienced Harassment or Discrimination at Queen's because of Accent	Have Not Experienced Harassment or Discrimination at Queen's because of Accent
African descent (e.g., African American, African Canadian, Caribbean...)	7.1%	5.6%
Chinese	14.3%	16.7%
European descent (e.g., British, Scottish, Irish, German...)	28.6%	55.6%
Latin American (including indigenous persons from Central and South America)	7.1%	5.6%
South Asian/East Indian (e.g., Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian from India, East Indian from Guyana, Trinidadian, Sri Lankan, East African)	14.3%	5.6%
West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Lebanese, Afghan)	14.3%	5.6%
Other	7.1% (French)	5.6% (Quebecoise)
Undisclosed	7.1%	N/A

Also important to understand is the way in which experiences of harassment or discrimination related to accent impact the individual on an emotional and/or psychological level. In an effort to ascertain this information, two interrelated survey questions were asked. In response to the first question - has harassment or discrimination, because of your accent,

affected your comfort within a professional setting, 85.7% of respondents answered in the affirmative (n=14). In response to the second question - have you experienced stress or do you feel more self-conscious as a result of negative responses to your accent, 92.9% answered 'yes' (n=14). Evident in both of these responses is the substantial emotional impact which discrimination and/or harassment related to accent has on educators at Queen's University.

To fully understand experiences of harassment/discrimination related to accent, educators who self-identified as having experienced harassment/discrimination were asked to describe their experiences. Respondents were provided with a grid matrix and were asked to identify the type of harassment/discrimination they experienced in addition to the context in which this harassment/discrimination occurred. Survey respondents were asked to select all that applied (see Table 1.10). The responses to this question yielded some very interesting results which, in particular, speak to the varied nature of harassment/discrimination in relation to accent. Important to hi-light in these responses is the way in which harassment/discrimination related to accent can be both overt and subtle.

One of the more subversive contexts in which harassment/discrimination occurred according to survey respondents was on student evaluation forms (e.g. USAT). At Queen's University, USAT evaluations are completed by students at the conclusion of a course and are anonymous. Some of the highest rates of harassment/discrimination were identified under the category of student evaluation forms (e.g. USAT). Also interesting to note is that this harassment/discrimination took on multiple forms including, derogatory or abusive language,

stereotyping, undermining of academic ability, undermining of classroom authority, hostile/disrespectful treatment and negative assumptions. In relation to more overt forms of harassment/discrimination, respondents identified high rates of its occurrence in the context of instruction (e.g. classroom). A high number of respondents stated that this harassment/discrimination took on the following forms within the classroom, undermining of academic ability, undermining of classroom authority and negative assumptions.

In their qualitative responses, a number of respondents (both accented and non-accented) pointed to their own experiences of harassment and/or discrimination on USAT forms or the potential for this type of negative assessment on USAT forms.

"I believe I was discriminated against by my students. In the first few years of my teaching, some has inappropriate comments on my USAT. However, nothing is visible at this stage now, but I think the negative perception is still there."

"I have spoken to colleagues with the above accents who have had students complain on their USATs about it. Again, sadly, we prejudge based on things like accent, and this is connected to stereotypes about ethnicity and intelligence in certain areas.

I think the evaluation of educators - through USATS - lends itself to biased responding for many reasons. I think my recommendation would be to develop a more fair evaluation system as a whole that would protect against accent bias, gender bias, age bias, racial bias, sexual orientation bias, etc. The current system is almost asking for bias to be present. If we want people to be treated fairly we need a fair evaluation system."

Demonstrated in these responses and the statistics provided above, USAT evaluation forms in both perceived and real experiences are a site for the harassment and/or discrimination of accented educators.

Further, in the context of this question, it is important to consider from where the harassment/discrimination is coming. In the context of instruction (e.g. classroom), office hours, and student evaluations (e.g. USAT) it is either implied or reasonable to assume that harassment/discrimination is coming from students. In the context of interactions with colleagues, interactions with direct supervisor, and departmental performance evaluations, it is either implied or reasonable to assume this harassment/discrimination is coming from colleagues or fellow educators. What is significant to note is that 63.6% of respondents indicated that harassment/discrimination in the form of stereotyping and the undermining of academic abilities was happening in the context of interactions with colleagues (n=11).

This is an important dimension to hi-light because it showcases the fact that not only is harassment/discrimination of accented educators happening in the context of the student/educator relationship but also among educator colleagues. Connected to this finding, respondents were asked whether or not they felt they had ever been denied work or service opportunities at Queen's University because of accent. A majority of respondents, 71.4% answered 'no' while 28.6% of respondents answered 'yes' (n=14). While it is positive to see that the majority of respondents did not feel they had been denied work or service opportunities at Queen's because of accent, it is somewhat alarming that 28.6% of respondents felt they had.

Table 1.10 Type of Harassment/Discrimination and Context

	Instructional (e.g. classroom)	Office hours	Interactions with colleagues	Interactions with direct supervisor	Departmental performance evaluation	Student evaluations(e.g. USAT)	Total Responses
Derogatory or abusive language (verbal or written)	5 (45.5%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	8 (72.7%)	11
Stereotyping (e.g. ethnicity, race, place of origin)	3 (27.3%)	2 (18.2%)	7 (63.6%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	6 (54.5%)	11
Undermining of academic abilities	7 (63.6%)	1 (9.1%)	7 (63.6%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (27.3%)	7 (63.6%)	11
Undermining of classroom authority	7 (70.0%)	1 (10.0%)	4 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (50.0%)	10
Hostile/disrespectful treatment	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	4 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8
Negative assumptions	8 (80.0%)	2 (20.0%)	5 (50.0%)	2 (20.0%)	1 (10.0%)	8 (80.0%)	10

Accent Harassment and/or Discrimination and the Act of Witnessing – All Survey Respondents

While a primary purpose of this research was to gauge first-hand experiences of harassment/discrimination related to accent, there was also an interest in understanding whether or not educators within the Queen's community, both accented and non-accented, had witnessed harassment or discrimination related to accent. In total, 63.3% of survey respondents stated that they had not witnessed harassment or discrimination on the basis of accent toward other educators at Queen's, while 36.7% indicated that they had witnessed this type of harassment or discrimination (n=128). As a follow-up to this question, respondents were asked what type of the harassment/discrimination they had witnessed and in what context (see Table 1.11).

In response to this question, 87.8% of respondents indicated they had witnessed negative assumptions being made in an instructional setting (e.g. classroom) in relation to accented educators (n=41). Also in the context of an instructional setting, 87.2% of respondents indicated they have witnessed stereotyping related to ethnicity, race, place of origin (n=39). Further, 82.4% indicated that they had witnessed the undermining of accented educators authority within the classroom setting (n=34).

In relation to the experiences of accented educators' interactions with colleagues, 56.6% of respondents indicated that they had witnessed the undermining of accented educators academic abilities by colleagues (n=30). These results point to a negative climate for accented educators inside and outside of the classroom, among both colleagues and students.

Further exploring the concept of 'witnessing' harassment/discrimination, survey respondents were asked whether or not they knew of educators at Queen's who may have been denied work or service opportunities because of their accent. In response to this question 25.5 % of respondents answered, 'YES' they knew of educators who may have been denied work or service opportunities because of their accent, while 74.5% of respondents answered 'NO' (n=47). Again, while the majority of respondents answered in the negative to this question, 25.5% of respondents felt they knew of educators at Queen's who had been denied work or service opportunities because of their accent. Although this is a small number of respondents it remains a concerning statistic.

In an effort to gauge survey respondents' awareness of resources on campus, they were asked who they might turn to for advice or assistance if they themselves or someone they knew were experiencing or had experienced accent discrimination (n=126). While answers to this question varied, there were a number of services which garnered higher response rates than others. Respondents were asked to select all applicable options. Receiving the highest number of responses were the Human Rights Office (54.8%), Department Head Senior (46.0%), Another Colleague (44.4%) and the Equity Office (42.9%). It is also worth noting some of the services which garnered less than 40% of responses; these services include the Union (e.g. QUFA, PSAC, USW 2010-01) (33.3%), an Administrator (e.g. Dean, Provost) (26.2%) and a Graduate co-ordinator (24.2%).

Table 1.11 Type and Context of Harassment/Discrimination Witnessed

	Instructional (e.g. classroom)	Interactions with colleagues	Interactions with direct supervisor	Performance evaluation processes	Total Responses
Derogatory or abusive language (verbal or written)	18 (78.3%)	9 (39.1%)	4 (17.4%)	10 (43.5%)	23
Stereotyping (e.g. ethnicity, race, place of origin)	34 (87.2%)	19 (48.7%)	1 (2.6%)	13 (33.3%)	39
Undermining of academic abilities	23 (76.7%)	17 (56.7%)	4 (13.3%)	12 (40.0%)	30
Undermining of classroom authority	28 (82.4%)	12 (35.3%)	2 (5.9%)	10 (29.4%)	34
Hostile/disrespectful treatment	20 (80.0%)	12 (48.0%)	2 (8.0%)	7 (28.0%)	25
Negative assumptions	36 (87.8%)	20 (48.8%)	2 (4.9%)	13 (31.7%)	41

Moving Forward – Two Divergent Viewpoints:

The concluding question of the survey asked respondents to think about proactive measures which could be taken at Queen's University, to ensure that educators with accents are treated fairly and are able to participate fully and equitably within the Queen's community. In total 73 respondents provided recommendations in response to this question. These answers varied greatly but upon analysis, distinctive themes emerged. Echoing the two streams discussed previously within this report, answers to this question can be characterized into two overarching themes; education/training for accented educators or education/training for members of the Queen's community regarding respect and acceptance of all patterns of speech.

In answering the final question of the survey, a number of respondents indicated that it was the responsibility of the accented educator to ensure that they were able to participate fully within the Queen's community. In these responses, responsibility is placed upon the individual, in this case the accented educator, rather than the institution or greater community of Queen's University.

"The school needs to work on helping instructors with accents to lose their accent. The students deserve this."

"I think there should be workshops or courses offered to instructor to overcome their accents."

"Pronunciation sessions, where a linguist can speak with the educator with an accent to identify errors in pronunciation and correct them."

"Encourage educators to talk to their students about their accent, rather than having it be an elephant in the room. I think students would react positively to an educator who said during the first lecture "Look, I realize my accent can make it difficult for people to understand me when I

start talking quickly or say certain words. If you want me to repeat myself or clarify something, just ask me."

"There needs to be arrangements to make sure the instructors are clear and easy to understand. It is unfair to students learning difficult subjects if their instructor cannot speak the language clearly."

Articulated in these responses, is the idea that individuals should seek out measures to mitigate or "lose" their accent and that these steps will not only enhance their own experiences at the university, but also positively impact the experiences of the students within their classrooms. Clearly expressed in these quotations is the notion of individual responsibility.

Counter to these responses is a second theme which suggests that the responsibility for ensuring accented educators at Queen's are treated fairly and are able to participate fully and equitably, lies with the institution and larger Queen's community. In this theme, responsibility is displaced from the individual, the accented educator, to the institution and university community as a whole. In response to this question two central ideas emerged; the need to educate students, staff and faculty about respecting difference and the need to recruit and hire more diverse faculty.

Recommended in a number of responses, was the idea that training and/or a course, on valuing and respecting difference, should be offered to all members of the Queen's community and in particular targeted at incoming and current students.

"Educate our students, especially undergraduate students during orientation week. It could be very foreign for domestic students who have never interacted with people with accent before to

take a class with an instructor who has accent….They also need to recognize laughing at one's accent or underestimate one's credibility due to accent is inappropriate."

"An ongoing, annual, required anti accent discrimination course for all students (undergrad and grad), and ALL STAFF AND FACULTY. Every single person on campus ought to be required to complete IN-CLASS equity training EVERY SINGLE YEAR. It is an affront to equity and social justice that this is not required at all schools and places of employment across the country."

"Require students to take from a set of courses that would teach them to think critically about contemporary N. American culture. This could be a course in Indigenous Studies, or Critical Perspectives on Race & Racism, or a course on Critiques of Popular Culture, or something. There could be number of them, from which students would be required to take one (or two), early on in their time here."

"Maybe something could be done during orientation week to sensitize new students to the richness of cultures on Campus, including accented populations, so the students who have not had a chance to travel much, or who are not coming from major urban centers, realize the value of having instructors from a variety of origins. It is very discouraging to see undergraduate students disrespect and reject excellent teaching assistants because they have a strong accent..."

Rather than placing responsibility on a particular individual, these statements suggest that responsibility lies at the overarching systems level and that the best way to tackle this systemic issue is through education. Captured in the words of these respondents, education is the key to ensuring that accented educators are treated fairly and are able to participate fully and equitably.

Further highlighting the responsibility of the institution as a whole, a number of respondents suggested that one of the ways to ensure that accented educators feel they are being treated fairly and equitably is to increase the number of accented educators at the university.

“Queen's should ensure a greater diversity of instructors and foster a culture of celebration of this richness. “

“Honestly, I don't know that there is much you can do. We have an overwhelmingly white, mainstream Canadian student body, and the same is true for much of our faculty. Prejudice is a fact of life for visible minorities and people with accents. You can't change that with policy. You can only change it by hiring more minorities and Aboriginal people as professors and staff, by integrating diversity into all classes and faculties, and by encouraging more Aboriginal people from all Nations and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds to attend Queen's. It's not a quick fix. It's going to take time and effort.”

“Maintain and strengthen equity policies in hiring, and provide more funding for overseas graduate students. A big part of the problem (and I see the elitism at Queen's as a problem) is the culture among students, and that is hard to change. The only thing I can think of is that students must see that intellect and ability are not confined to a specific demographic. The more instructors and teaching assistants from diverse backgrounds that they see, the more of them, I hope, will come to respect scholars who do not look and sound like them.”

Evident in these responses and the ones discussed above related to education, is the desire and need to change a particular “culture” at Queen’s University in order to ensure that accented educators feel welcomed, supported and valued.

Expressed both explicitly and implicitly, survey respondents point to a “culture of whiteness” which acts as a barrier to the inclusion of accented and/or racialized educators within the Queen’s community. Further articulating this sentiment respondents stated:

“Queen's is not a diversity friendly environment in my experience.”

“Queens is not a friendly place for non-queens graduates with accents. They need to learn from other institutions on how to interact with other individuals with different ethnicities and accents.”

“I think it is worth noting the under-representation of racialized faculty and its contribution to a "culture of whiteness" at Queen's, which certainly impacts students' sense of respect for instructors with accents.”

Depicted in these responses is the perception of a culture or ethos, at Queen's University, which is unfriendly or exclusionary to accented and/or racialized educators. In these quotations, the systemic nature of the problem is articulated.

It is also important to note that responses like the ones outlined above, echo the findings produced in a number of previous reports related to race and inclusion at Queen's University (Principal's Advisory Committee on Race Relations, *Towards Diversity and Equity at Queen's: A Strategy for Change,* 1991; Frances Henry, *Understanding the Experiences of Visible Minority and Aboriginal Faculty Members at Queen's University* (Henry Report)*,* 2003; *Queen's Diversity, Anti-Racism and Equity (D.A.R.E.) Report,* 2009; Helen Breslauer, *Employment Systems Review for Members of the Queen's University Faculty Association,* 2009; *The Diversity and Equity Task Force,* 2011; *Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Final Report*, 2017). More than 20 years beyond the Principal's Advisory Committee on Race Relations, *Towards Diversity and Equity at Queen's: A Strategy for Change* report, similar concerns related to diversity and inclusion at Queen's University remain. In order to fully and effectively address these concerns, accent and classroom authority must be a meaningful part of the conversation.

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