

People and Qualities: The nature and type of participants in an Australian MBTI® Qualifying Workshop

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Australians have always had mixed feelings about civilisation.

Peter Roebuck

What sort of people attend MBTI Qualifying workshops? This paper examines available data from approved MBTI Accreditation or Qualifying workshops I conducted from 1993 to 2006 inclusive. The course participants were predominantly Australian residents or citizens; the courses were conducted in a variety of settings and circumstances.

Background 1: Training and teaching people about the MBTI in Australia

The MBTI is a restricted instrument under state law in Australia, the United States and elsewhere. For the period of this study, people wishing to purchase and use the MBTI in Australia had to be either a registered psychologist or successfully complete an authorised MBTI Qualifying or Accreditation training course. Registered psychologists often completed such a course in any case to meet their own ethical standards; the history of the development of the MBTI has meant that knowledge about what it is and how to use it is essentially located outside universities (Geyer 1995), and so Qualifying courses provided the best means of learning about the subject.

For cultural reasons, *Accreditation* has been the term regularly used in Australia for MBTI Qualifying workshops. In this paper I will use the term *Qualifying* to describe the courses and *Accreditation* to describe the qualification gained on assessment. Accreditation courses or workshops have been offered in Australia for over 20 years. Initially there was no real regulation of these courses as far as content and presentation method, other than an acceptance by an MBTI distributor, although some moves were made in this direction in the early 1990s by Australian Psychologists Press (APP) consequent to its approval as an

Australian MBTI distributor. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was the initial distributor of the MBTI, and continued to do so for the period of the study.

In 1996, a decision was made by the MBTI publisher (Consulting Psychologists Press [CPP]) to assess the 6 courses then operating. The purpose of this decision was to establish what courses were to be available and the nature of the assessment for these courses, essentially a core English-language exam developed, and disseminated from the USA.

This process seemed commercial rather than educational, and it left four providers of courses, all based on Australia's east coast and collectively offering Qualifying workshops nationwide, although predominantly in capital cities. This situation lasted until mid-late 2006 when two providers discontinued their courses (including the courses from which data has been taken for this paper) following a CPP decision, one influenced by certain local considerations. Over the period of data collection, there have been some inconsistencies in the origin, communication and implementation of policy and decisions in this area.

In 2007, APP became the sole MBTI distributor and provider of Qualifying courses nationwide (effectively Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane), with permission given for the Type Resources Qualifying course to continue in the state of New South Wales only. This arrangement is continuing for 2008. APP became CPP Asia Pacific in March 2007, a subsidiary of CPP.

Background 2: The Courses

The data presented here comes from two MBTI Qualifying courses.

The first is an Australian course conducted between 1993 and 1995 on behalf of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) a distributor of the MBTI. I redeveloped the ACER course, wrote a course manual and assessment, and co-trained the course.

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The second was an American course developed by Otto Kroeger Associates (OKA). I was trained in this course in 1995 and commenced teaching it in Australia in 1996, the ACER course being discontinued by mutual agreement. The OKA course operated independently from ACER after mid-2002.

These courses usually presume what might generally be seen as adult learning principles of interaction, and training exercises. Co-presenters are also recommended to be different types so as to demonstrate different teaching styles. The presumption here is that participants will note the differences in behaviour and technique as a means of learning about typological differences.

This recommendation, which presumes a lot about participants' observational capacities and topic knowledge, can be also be inconsistent with some of the aims of the Qualifying courses. In the period under study, the MBTI publisher considered statistical material to be a core component of the course, as that explains and presents the MBTI's claim to be a scientific psychological instrument. Accordingly, these courses acquaint participants with statistical facts, as accepted in the field of psychometrics. The intricacies of Jung's theory and methods of MBTI interpretation also contain facts and instructions, even facts about the theory (i.e. what it is and what it isn't).

In addition, from 1996 the assessment for English-speaking countries included a standard English language (American) multiple choice/true-false examination with a pass mark of 80% necessitating a focus on teaching for the assessment, as opposed to developing other understandings required by individual participants and the group as a whole.

Developments and Change: Presenting the Courses

A dilemma for co-training is knowledge and language of the people concerned. A paradox of MBTI Qualifying workshops is that at a basic level (training people for Accreditation) the topic and course material essentially teach themselves, as it's an explanation of a model *via* related and clearly presented training materials. You don't need to be an absolute expert to train people at this level; there are plenty of instances of this in Australia and elsewhere, including my self-perception when I accepted the role of developing the ACER course in 1993.

However, it was preferable for me to become an expert. I didn't want to mislead people, and I'd sat in on presentations in these courses when that had been the case. When I

became an OKA Associate, I also had overall responsibility for the information being imparted, particularly regarding assessment. So I developed my own style of presenting the OKA course, collaborating with others for a while.

Essentially, course presentation has been a solo effort. In any case, I teach (rather than train) and as a subject-matter expert. The solo teaching was also partly due to course numbers that, for the most part, have hardly justified two presenters. This has something to do with economics, politics and marketing, as well as personal preferences. My aim in teaching MBTI was to get people to reflect on their knowledge and experience, so a more introverted approach, notwithstanding the extraverted side of standing in front of a group and talking/demonstrating/co-ordinating etc. In doing this, you need to be more than just a trainer of material.

The Data: Basic information

The timeframe for the data provided is from late November 1993 to June 30 2006, when the OKA course was discontinued in Australia following a policy decision by CPP Inc. in the previous year. Collation of the data is predominantly complete.

More than 140 courses comprise the data set, whilst 1025 participants are represented in the Type Table provided in Appendix 1. The sample is of those who have successfully completed the course and its assessments. Those who have withdrawn from the course for any reason, or booked a place but failed to attend are not included. This Type Table provides information on the distribution of Types in the sample. The type indicated is the preference arrived at by the participant, not the MBTI result.

For much of the lifetime of these courses, participants were sent an MBTI for completion with specific instructions *viz.*

"When completing the MBTI, it's important to be as relaxed as possible and approach the questions according to what you naturally prefer, rather than a learned or situational response. If you're unsure about a question (i.e. you want to answer both or neither of the choices), then leave it blank and move on to the next question. If you return to the question and are still unsure, leave it out."

This statement is taken directly from a letter to a participant in a course in Adelaide. Note here that the MBTI is the only personality instrument that permits or encourages omissions for the reason that Isabel Myers didn't want people completing it to answer

something they didn't want to, thus providing, in her view, incorrect information

The courses were conducted around Australia, with one course conducted in Dubai for Australians and other expatriates teaching at Zayed University. The predominant location is Melbourne, where the core business was conducted. All State capitals are represented as well as country areas in Victoria and Tasmania. Appendix 4 provides sample data on the place of residence of participants.

The sample comprises a mixture of those who sought out the course, and those sent by organisations requiring them to do the training such as consulting firms and public service departments. It is almost entirely comprised of Australian citizens or residents and includes four participants identifying as Aboriginal persons. Small numbers of New Zealanders and people from England, Ireland, Hong Kong, Singapore, the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Canada have attended, as well as one Kuwaiti woman. The age of participants ranged from early 20s to late 60s.

The largest group was 27 participants, followed by 23, and 18. At the other end were 19 courses with 1 participant, 17 with 2, 14 with 3 and 11 with 4. Venues ranged from the more conventional corporate offices and training rooms to hotel suites, small offices, home offices (including mine), kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms. Of the 17 individual courses, 12 participants were female and 5 male; 13 were extraverts with 7 preferring ENFP. For the pairs, 28 were female and 6 male, 21 were extraverts with 8 preferring ENFP and 5 ENTP. 7 preferred INFP.

Appendix 1 shows that more than twice as many females than males attended these courses. ENFP is the modal type; ESTP is the least represented. NPs are 48% of the sample; SPs 6.5%. Approximately 75% preferred intuition, 56% extraversion and 56% perceiving. Thinking and feeling were almost equally balanced. Females outnumbered males in all type categories excepting INTP and ISTP.

Appendices 2 and 3 show Type Table distributions for males and females respectively. The immediate differences in these distributions are the male group preferring introversion and thinking overall.

This data will be further considered later in this paper.

Participant Qualifications

The Australian education system varies significantly from those in the United States and the UK, particularly at the basic schooling level (elementary/high school). There are also

more similarities at the tertiary level with the UK than the US; many Masters degrees are at the level of some PhD courses in the US, for instance. Historically, the first year of tertiary study for Australian undergraduates is subject-oriented, rather than a general year and a basic degree is three years in length. Statistics in any form is not encountered by most students.

Although business courses currently predominate in Australian universities, for financial reasons more than anything else, not so many years ago these and other courses were attended largely by those already working full-time. Often these were public servants whose only means of gaining a tertiary qualification was to have their employer pay. Some, particularly managers and trainers, but also specialist positions, gained knowledge via substantial in-house courses programs, their formal qualifications remaining at the level of high school completion, often one or two years below that. The age cohort that experienced these conditions of learning feature strongly in this course data.

Unsurprisingly, then, Australian MBTI Qualifying courses have generally, although not consistently, accepted participants without degree-level qualifications, in addition to those who have the basic requirement of a degree and a professional reason for using the MBTI. This is consistent with a culture that currently places store on recognition for prior learning, and which has also a long tradition of working-class self-education, amidst the usual anti-intellectual approach endemic in most cultures, which is there for both good and bad reasons.

At times there have been moves to formalise this approach in requiring specific sub-degree qualifications (e.g. Certificate IV in Workplace Training) as a pre-requisite. Apart from making a mistake in considering that the MBTI is going to be predominantly used in training situations, rather than in consulting, coaching, counselling, managing, leading, mentoring and the like, this ignores that the key point is whether or not the person is able to engage with the topic.

This is essentially an intellectual question, not something related to credentials. A qualification is nothing without a broad understanding of the nature of human beings, however gathered.

My experience was that as many, perhaps more, people with degree-level qualifications can struggle with the course content. Age is also a factor. Psychologically, an MBTI Qualifying course or equivalent is of more value to someone over 30, even late 30s, than younger

people, even though the course may be well-comprehended intellectually.

Appendix 4 contains the stated qualifications of the sample. This data is taken from a voluntary question on the MBTI Form. The categories relate predominantly to those on Forms G and M, which are US categories. Some participants added their own description (e.g. Graduate Diploma or Certificate). Sometimes extra information was given by participants. Many participants found the lack of Australian categories annoying (seeing it as American "cultural imperialism") and this interfered with their appreciation of the ideas it contained. The data indicates that a minimum of 22.2% of participants had not completed a degree and a minimum of 60% of participants claimed a degree; 20% Masters or higher.

Participants and the courses

In my experience, Australians as a whole are more informal in their approach to learning about the MBTI than what I experienced in the USA in my OKA training. For instance, they are less likely to engage the pre-reading, on the basis that they'll get the answers to their questions at the course directly from the presenter. Groups and individuals I've taught have readily agreed with that proposition. Sometimes the pressure of engaging with the pre-reading has distracted people from engaging with the course, other times it's given useful context. I taught presuming nothing about the pre-reading, and aiming to be open about others' experience with the MBTI, which varied a lot. More than a few had to unlearn what they'd been taught previously about type and the MBTI.

By developing a means of teaching the OKA course for small groups (down to 5 people), I was then able to respond effectively to the surprisingly large numbers of people who wanted to be MBTI accredited in groups of under 5 (mainly 2-3 people, or as individuals). I had to request permission to teach the OKA course in this way, and it was extremely successful as far as learning goes. Participants were able in this format to have all their questions asked and answered regarding MBTI and type, whether theoretical, practical or personal. Their expertise and interests are also taken into account in a way that can't be done in larger groups. The real value of texts provided for this course, like the *MBTI Manual*, much like texts in other disciplines, is often after the course, rather than before, when there is more idea of what to look for and what it means.

Participants' generally ambivalent approach to pre-reading also had something to do with the statistical component of the study. As a culture, Australians are not all that enamoured of statistical approaches, although this may be changing with the increasing emphasis on testing as part of education over the past few years.

Participants' approach to statistical material then, was fairly close to cynicism, but it also includes a perception that the MBTI must work because it does and so the professional work of others, i.e. psychometricians, is accepted as such, however arcane it may seem. In type terms, I found that NFs, as a group, can treat the whole statistical project with something approaching disdain, relying on their self-perceived innate goodness to present the MBTI plausibly.

In general, participants saw the statistical component of the course as not all that relevant to what they intend to do with the MBTI. Where participants had expertise in statistics (this was quite rare), they were useful in providing another means than mine in explaining the topic, although one or two remained skeptical, often rightly so, about the mathematical presuppositions behind the methods of psychometricians. C.G. Jung's comment that once you get into statistics you get outside the realm of psychology altogether would resonate with these people.

Having said that, it's also difficult to get participants to see past the numbers and the MBTI itself. Results are routinely linked to score and skill; the notion of the MBTI as a sorting device providing levels of confidence about the result is hard to grasp for many. Often this has to do with a somewhat fluid understanding of what type is from a personal perspective (viz., "I've changed this time") and a presumption that the MBTI and type theory are one and the same.

The data examined in this paper indicates that approximately 87% of the time the MBTI result was the correct one for the person concerned regardless of what they perceived beforehand.

As a whole, these Australian participants found the ideas of C.G. Jung congenial and interesting. Many participants had come to the course via Jung's ideas and usually had little trouble seeing the relevance of his broader theory to a personality questionnaire. On the other hand, a number of participants, tertiary qualified or otherwise, were completely unfamiliar with Jung, to the extent of thinking him Chinese.

Teaching, Learning and Communication Styles

The smaller groups and individual sessions on the whole attracted extraverts, often motivated by the prospect of having a conversation/discussion with someone for a few days. Introverts have reported informally that they would be happier to be anonymous in a group.

Something unfamiliar and even stressful such as statistical material took most types out of their comfort zones and so some intuitives might ask for more data and perceiving types more conclusive data than what they might ordinarily require.

As a theoretical course, one would expect that the course would attract intuitives, and this was indeed the case. Although there is no reliable Australian data on the distribution of preferences in the population, what there is, together with experience and observation suggests that those participants who attend these courses enter an environment almost directly opposite to that of Australian culture in general as far as sensing and intuition goes. One might, however, expect a similar distribution in academia and various professions.

Sensing types learned more from tangible examples, including videos, and usually had a rote style of studying for the exams. On the other hand, intuitives valued inference and interpretation, sometimes to the extent of inventing their own theoretical approach.

Thinking and feeling types tended to differ on what data was important, personal examples being more valuable for the latter. Both types were able to argue from their particular perspective, whether it be logic or personal values. A congenial atmosphere was important to feeling types, less so for thinking types. As a person preferring thinking, there were often specific management issues when teaching a group predominantly or entirely preferring feeling, particularly if I considered that a non-congenial idea had to be engaged with. On the other hand, thinking types could dismiss personal data or emotion, an important contribution to learning about people, as not being relevant.

MBTI Qualifying workshops are conducted in the context of enabling people to purchase a saleable product, or tool which, depending on the approach to the subject matter, can tend to undermine somewhat the intention of its authors that it be about the constructive use of differences.

How to understand yourself and manage yourself better and how to understand others is nonetheless an important part of the teach-

ing; the most important in my view. Here the context is not on external behaviours as much as why people do what they do and think (in the general sense) what they think. Discussion, inquiry and personal examples are more relevant than training exercises here, and the focus is on Jung's ideas, rather than the MBTI as an instrument.

Participants came to the course from various perspectives, and with various needs, many of the "tool" kind, others to help others (often in the latter context) or to understand more about Jungian ideas. For a few, it was their first experience of the subject matter.

Discussion in the courses invariably took the shape of discussions about the preferences of partners, children, and relatives with some live issues introduced, particularly if a child or relation was having learning difficulties, which usually meant someone not attuned to conventional instruction, fidgety and physically oriented. These people tended to be in the SP category, somewhat underrepresented in the course, although, when they were present, such people provided valuable information on how they saw life to the other participants.

A concern was the tendency for authorities and others to seek to apply a chemical solution *via* drugs such as ritalin rather than investigate ways of understanding this life perspective. Some participants considered the discussion on this issue to be worth the cost of the course alone.

Another theme was around "you can be whoever you want to be" a phrase which appealed to specific types, notably ENFP, but which caused problems for others. Participants who were parents and/or career counsellors were particularly interested in this topic; some of these people had seen, to their surprise, that children and clients often didn't find this proposition helpful, although it was one generally expressed. The psychological orientation suggested by the MBTI and Jung provided an insight as to why some children needed structure and direction, and even those more spontaneously inclined needed to know what they didn't want to do. Not everything was open.

Many people also came to the course at a liminal point in their life, where they seemed to be unconsciously needing to discover something about themselves, or even discover themselves in the first place. This was particularly synchronistic in the case of successful professional women in their late 20s - early 30s and it happened too often for it to be merely coincidence. Essentially these people had been successful, doing what was expected and en-

joying it, but had found growing dissatisfaction.

Gender

Jung uniquely considered Feeling (as defined) as a decision-making process, separate from emotion. Although he considered feeling to be more associated with females and thinking with males, he also described Freud as a feeling type. Isabel Myers conducted research on whether preferences were equally held by each gender, and discovered that more males than females preferred thinking and more females than males preferred feeling. The data for this is consistent across cultures, but no claim is made for similar distributions in percentage terms (Myers et al 1998).

MBTI Qualifying workshops are places where typological similarities are able to be demonstrated as being more significant than gender as far as cognitive processes are concerned. Males preferring feeling and females preferring thinking consistently report either some uneasiness towards them from their peer gender group, or a recognition that their experience of themselves is not the norm or stereotype. This may be particularly the case for males preferring feeling in rural and regional areas. A female who's successful in a male-oriented profession seems also likely to have similar type preferences to her male colleagues, and to display dissimilar attributes to the female cultural stereotype. The data also gives some evidence for the feminisation of particular careers, notably those to do with learning and helping. An implication here is

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that males may be at a disadvantage as far as interest and experience goes where these issues are concerned.

Appendices 2 and 3 show different type distributions for male and female participants. 57% of males preferred thinking compared to 42% of females. 60% of females preferred extraversion compared to 49% of males. Whilst, according to type theory, the thinking-feeling difference is not unexpected, the overall male preference for introversion requires further examination, perhaps regarding age or occupation.

There may also be variables according to selection of courses and type of teaching preferred, although anecdotally this seems fairly mixed as many participants were unaware of other courses, whilst others had made specific selections based on course locality and availability, as well as what they may have known of the presenter, or of other presenters.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to report on my experience of conducting MBTI Qualifying workshops over a 13 year period, the people I encountered, what they expected and how they responded to the material presented, culturally and otherwise. Some fundamental demographic data on course participants, the nature of the course and the nature of the topic was also presented. Cultural variables have been identified. It is to be hoped that this study might encourage the research and publication of data from MBTI Qualifying workshops located in other countries.

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Appendix 1

MBTI® Qualifying Workshop Participants

*for courses conducted by Peter Geyer 1993-2006

No.=1025 M: 319 31.12% F: 706 68.88% ST: 153 SF: 105 NF: 408 NT: 359 SJ: 179 SP: 79	ISTJ Total: 59 %: 5.76 [7-10] M: 21 ; F: 38 *****	ISFJ Total: 29 %: 2.83 [7-10] M: 11 ; F: 18 ***	INFJ Total: 54 %: 5.27 [2-3] M: 12 ; F: 42 *****	INTJ Total: 70 %: 6.83 [2-3] M: 22 ; F: 48 *****
	ISTP Total: 19 %: 1.86 [4-7] M: 14 ; F: 5 **	ISFP Total: 17 %: 1.66 [5-7] M: 7 ; F: 10 **	INFP Total: 116 %: 11.31 [3-4] M: 34 ; F: 82 *****	INTP Total: 82 %: 8.00 [3-4] M: 42 ; F: 40 *****
	ESTP Total: 19 %: 1.86 [6-8] M: 6 ; F: 13 **	ESFP Total: 24 %: 2.34 [8-10] M: 4 ; F: 20 ***	ENFP Total: 176 %: 17.17 [6-7] M: 46 ; F: 130 *****	ENTP Total: 124 %: 12.10 [4-6] M: 34 ; F: 90 *****
	ESTJ Total: 56 %: 5.46 [12-15] M: 18 ; F: 38 *****	ESFJ Total: 35 %: 3.41 [7-10] M: 7 ; F: 28 ***	ENFJ Total: 62 %: 6.05 [3-5] M: 14 ; F: 48 *****	ENTJ Total: 83 %: 8.10 [3-5] M: 27 ; F: 56 *****

TJ = 267 26.05%

Group Type

E N F P

Modal Type

E N F P

E 578 56.39%	43.61% 447	I
S 258 25.17%	P 74.83% 767	N
T 512 49.95%	J 50.05% 513	F
J 447 43.61%	56.37% 578	P

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Appendix 2

MBTI® Qualifying Workshop Male Participants

*for courses conducted by Peter Geyer 1993-2006

No. = 319	<u>I</u>STJ	<u>I</u>SFJ	<u>I</u>NFJ	<u>I</u>NTJ
	Total: 21	Total: 11	Total: 12	Total: 22
	%: 6.58 *****	%: 3.45 ***	%: 3.764 *****	%: 6.9 *****
	<u>I</u>STP	<u>I</u>SFP	<u>I</u>NFP	<u>I</u>NTP
ST: 59	Total: 14	Total: 7	Total: 34	Total: 42
SF: 29	%: 4.39 ****	%: 2.19 **	%: 10.66 *****	%: 13.17 *****
	<u>E</u>STP	<u>E</u>SFP	<u>E</u>NFP	<u>E</u>NTP
NF: 106	Total: 6	Total: 4	Total: 46	Total: 34
NT: 125	%: 1.88 **	%: 1.25 *	%: 14.42 *****	%: 10.66 *****
	<u>E</u>STJ	<u>E</u>SFJ	<u>E</u>NFJ	<u>E</u>NTJ
SJ: 57	Total: 18	Total: 7	Total: 14	Total: 27
SP: 31	%: 5.64 *****	%: 2.19 **	%: 4.39 ****	%: 8.46 *****

TJ = 88 27.59%

Group Type

I N T P

Modal Type

E N F P

E	156	48.9%		51.1%	163	I
S	88	27.59%	P	72.41%	231	N
T	184	57.68%	J	42.34%	135	F
J	132	41.38%		48.62%	187	P

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Appendix 3

MBTI® Qualifying Workshop Female Participants

*for courses conducted by Peter Geyer 1993-2006

No. = 706	ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
	Total: 38 %: 5.38 *****	Total: 18 %: 2.55 ***	Total: 42 %: 5.94 *****	Total: 48 %: 6.8 *****
ST: 94	ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
SF: 76	Total: 5 %: 0.71 *	Total: 10 %: 1.42 **	Total: 82 %: 11.61 *****	Total: 40 %: 5.67 *****
NF: 302	ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
NT: 234	Total: 13 %: 1.84 **	Total: 20 %: 2.83 ***	Total: 130 %: 18.41 ***** *****	Total: 90 %: 12.75 *****
SJ: 122	ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
SP: 48	Total: 38 %: 5.38 *****	Total: 28 %: 3.97 ****	Total: 48 %: 6.05 *****	Total: 56 %: 7.93 *****

TJ = 180 25.5%

Group Type

E N F P

Modal Type

E N F P

E 423 59.92%	40.08% 283	I
S 170 24.08%	P 75.92% 536	N
T 328 46.46%	J 53.54% 378	F
J 316 44.76%	55.24% 390	P

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Appendix 4

MBTI Qualifying Workshops conducted by Peter Geyer

Participants: Age Ranges

20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	Uns.
1.5%	8.5%	15.6%	14.4%	19.1%	17.1%	11.3%	5.6%	1.1%	5.7%

N=846

Participants: Educational Qualifications

Some HS	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Some Uni	Assoc. Deg.	Grad. Cert.	Trade Tech
8	7	12	47	59	20	2	7
Fr.	Jr.	Soph.	Deg.	G.Dip	Mast.	Doct.	Uns.
6	11	9	317	22	150	19	150

N=846

Participants: Cultural Identification or Nationality

Assyr.	Aus. Ab.	Can.	China	Eng.	Fiji	Fran.	Ger.	Indon	Ire.
1	4	4	3	30	1	1	4	1	6
Ital	Kuw.	NZ	SAFR	Scot.	Sing.	Sril.	Swed.	Thai.	USA
3	1	24	4	2	1	3	3	1	18

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