

## The strengths and limitations of using essentialist cultural theory to help understand international students

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This paper, drawn from doctoral research, deliberates on the strengths and limitations of essentialist cultural theory in helping lecturers in higher education understand their international students. The theoretical analysis is undertaken in response to an educational model from Western Europe utilising Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions to underpin its approach to understanding how diverse cultures in the classroom might manifest themselves and what implications this could have for students' academic work and social interactions between lecturers and students. The paper concludes that although essentialist cultural theory can be useful in some respects to help lecturers reflect on the idea of culture and help prepare them for working with international students, its limitations make it unwise for them to use it as their primary guiding principle in their interactions in the classroom.