# Trialling virtual cross-cultural learning with Australian and Hong Kong allied health students to improve cultural competency

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# Virtual intercultural activity overview

1. Introduction and online preparation tasks

2. Individual cultural self assessment

3. Virtual student group meeting via Skype

4. Written cultural comparison narrative reflection

5. Asynchronous feedback via Padlet

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# Research methods

**Pilot project**
**Mixed Methods (sequential exploratory study design)**

**Quantitative pre- and post-online survey**

Survey items:

- Cultural confidence, Cultural engagement, and Cultural respect (Intercultural Sensitivity Scale; Chen & Starosta, 2000)

- Cultural attitudes and preferences (Ethnocentric Tendency Scale; Chui & Leung, 2014; Yashima, 2010)

- Social responsibility and awareness (Global Citizenship Scale; Morais & Ogden, 2011)

**Qualitative group interviews**

Post-activity completion

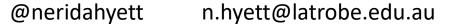- Hong Kong (n=9), Bendigo (n=3) and Melbourne (n=2)

Direct qualitative content analysis using intercultural and global citizenship learning theory (Lilley, Barker & Harris, 2015) and a model of cultural competency (Darby & Knevel, 2014)

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# Participant location and survey response rate

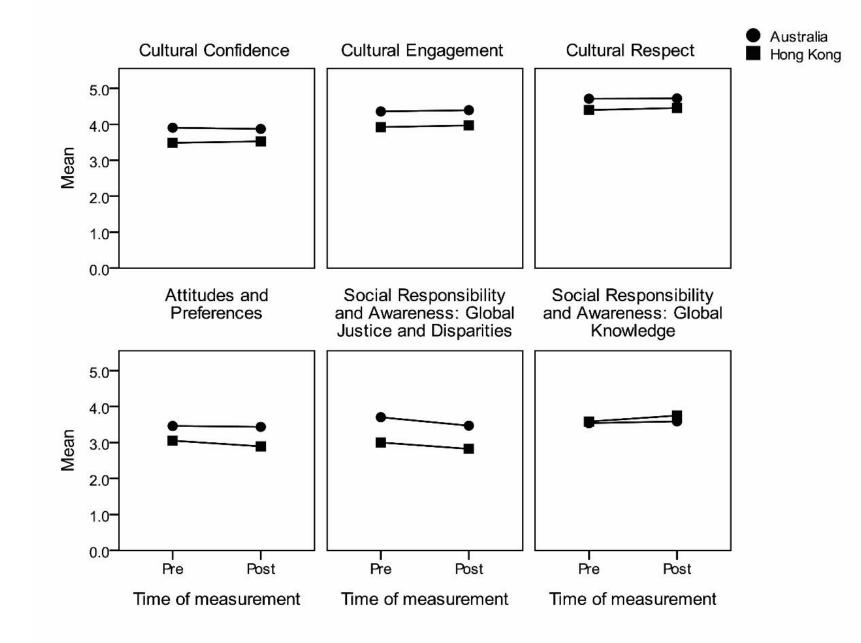| Location | Total activity participants | Pre Survey responses | Post Survey responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hong Kong | 58 | 61 (105%) | 52 (90%) |
| Melbourne | 98 | 41 (42%) | 13 (13%) |
| Bendigo | 45<br><br>(Occupational Therapy 21)<br>(Oral Health 24) | 28 (62%) | 13 (29%) |
| TOTAL | 201 | 130 (65%) | 78 (39%) |

**Figure 1 Pre- and Post-Test Difference for Cultural Competency items**

# Qualitative findings

- Intercultural skill practice and learning
    - Students learned and practiced a range of intercultural skills including adapting language, demonstrating respect and empathy, and being curious about difference

- Diversity at Home and Abroad
    - Students reported improved awareness and appreciation of diversity of students within their own cohort and across cohorts

- Global Citizenship learning
    - Some students had increased interest in travelling overseas for placement or work

- Out-of-Comfort-Zone experiences
    - Discomforting/disorienting experiences identified by students might be indicators of engagement and transformative learning

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# Implications for practice and research

- Tailor activities to suit students' different intercultural learning needs (baseline and throughout) e.g. optional preparation tasks

- Use strategies to diversify cultural engagement (Harrison, 2015), e.g. overseas collaborations and fixed group ratios

- Provide opportunities to share cultural similarities e.g. experience of being a student (reduce feelings of cultural distance (Harrison, 2015))

- Utilise Diversity at Home as a classroom resource

- Provide opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous interaction

- Consider technology options, balancing digital literacy and accessibility

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# Thank you

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