Internationalisation at home: Intercultural learning for social psychology students

Patricia M. Brown, Anita S. Mak & James T. Neill

An internationalised curriculum could better prepare graduates for globalising and increasingly culturally diverse workplaces. There is a need to provide students with intercultural learning opportunities at home because many students do not have access to study abroad opportunities. This paper describes curriculum changes designed to enhance students’ intercultural learning in a third year social psychology course at an Australian university. Two novel classroom activities based on the alliance building and cultural mapping methods of the Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning and Leadership (EXCELL) programme were used. Students reported increased intercultural learning in this course, especially regarding awareness and knowledge, compared to another third year psychology course they participated in that did not include such activities. Suggestions for embedding intercultural learning throughout the psychology curricula are discussed along with the challenges in sustaining such curriculum changes.

Keywords: Curriculum design; domestic students; globalisation; intercultural learning; internationalisation; psychology teaching; social psychology.

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There is growing recognition of the need to prepare domestic psychology graduates for employment in local, national, and global workplaces that are increasingly culturally diverse (Cranney & Dunn, 2011; Trapp et al., 2011). In response to increased globalisation, it has been argued that graduate attributes of psychology students should include emphases on global citizenship and employability (Cranney, Botwood & Morris, 2012). As a result, many universities are seeking to internationalise student experiences through student exchange opportunities and development of internationalised curricula (Hudzik, 2011; Leask, 2008; Mak & Kennedy, 2012). However, given not all students have opportunities for overseas exchange, there is a need for ‘internationalisation at home’ strategies that facilitate domestic (or home) students’ development of intercultural understanding and skills without the need for international travel experiences (Leask, 2008; Mak & Barker, 2015).

Psychology boards and accreditation councils have argued for the importance of designing and implementing psychology curricula that embrace cultural diversity in work settings (American Psychological Association: APA, 2013; Australian Psychology Accreditation Council: APAC, 2010) and students have indicated an awareness of the need for a curriculum that has a global focus (Green, 2005; Littleford, 2013). However, while a general consensus exists among industry, accreditation bodies, universities, and students regarding the need to internationalise higher education via an internationalised curriculum, there is a paucity of theory-driven and evidence-based literature on ‘how to’ embed intercultural competence in the mainstream curriculum (Freeman et al., 2009). This is particularly challenging in traditionally American- and Euro-centric psychology courses, which, in Australia, tend to attract predominantly domestic students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). On the other hand, the subject matter of psychology fields such as social psychology, includes group processes, self-concept formation, social identity, social perception, prosocial behaviour,
and intergroup relations; these content areas naturally lend themselves to discussion and reflections around intercultural learning and development of intercultural competence. Applied social psychology has also been the intellectual home of theory and research on acculturation, stereotypes and intergroup prejudice, which are highly relevant to understanding the enablers and inhibitors of intercultural competence development. Thus there are rich opportunities to develop and embed intercultural awareness and competence within the social psychology curriculum. This paper discusses the challenges to providing an internationalised experience to domestic psychology students and describes curriculum changes in a social psychology course aimed at increasing students’ intercultural learning.

The past decade has seen rapid growth in tertiary international student enrolments worldwide (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: OECD, 2015) with Australia, the UK and the US representing the top three destinations for tertiary international students. However, much smaller numbers of students from these countries study abroad (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: UNESCO, 2014). One traditional way of internationalising students’ university experience has been to encourage participation in study abroad programs. However, such programmes are not viable for all students and are often taken up by those from more socially advantaged backgrounds (Brooks & Waters, 2011). Internationalisation at home means that ‘home students are able to receive (and should be entitled to expect) an international higher education experience despite their own lack of mobility’ (Harrison, 2015, p.414). Internationalisation at home has three main components: ‘diversity as a resource’, ‘a culturally sensitive pedagogy’ and ‘an internationalised curriculum’ (Harrison, 2015; see also Crowther et al., 2003). Diversity as a resource involves meaningful interaction between domestic and international students. A culturally sensitive pedagogy means that university programmes should reflect and make use of the resources of a diverse student body (Harrison, 2015). However, research has shown low levels of interaction between domestic and international students in English-speaking host countries including Australia (Mak, Brown & Wadey, 2014; Volet & Ang, 2012), the US (Williams & Johnson, 2011), and England (Harrison & Peacock, 2010) with potential barriers to intercultural contact and friendships including language and intergroup anxiety. Likewise, low numbers of international students in psychology courses present a challenge to effectively teach these domestic psychology students about cultural diversity and globalisation ‘at home’ and to prepare them to operate in a multicultural society.

The other main component of internationalisation at home is the integration of knowledge and perspectives from a wide range of cultures into the formal curriculum; this component also emphasises development of personal competencies in students that enables them to apply this knowledge across cultural boundaries and to develop positive intercultural relationships (Harrison, 2015). In reviewing the internationalisation of the psychology curriculum in the US, Leong, Leach and Malikiosi-Loizos (2012) identified the enhancement of cross-cultural competence, arguably the most important outcome of an internationalised curriculum, as a major challenge that is difficult to define and even more difficult to teach and assess. In Australia, Zimitat (2005) found that less than half of the students they surveyed believed that their studies were preparing them to work effectively overseas. Students from health and science faculties had less positive perceptions in this respect than those in arts and education, or business and law.

Given the challenges to internationalisation outlined above, how can students’ intercultural learning be enhanced in the domestic classroom context? A qualitative study by King, Perez and Shim (2013) in the
US interviewed college students regarding institutional practices and students’ experiences with respect to the student outcome of intercultural effectiveness. Three main themes were identified. First, intercultural learning occurs when students have direct encounters with others’ experiences. Second, feeling safe to explore cultural differences is a key dimension of intercultural learning. Third, students use diverse approaches to cultural learning including listening to, and observing, others, engaging in personal reflections, exploring personal identity, and empathising with others.

In a critical review of contemporary practice and research in internationalisation within business education, UK-based Caruana and Ploner (2012) highlighted the importance of developing academic staff’s skills in managing increasing diversity in the student population and in engaging students in experiential learning for internationalising their outlooks. In Australian business education, Freeman et al. (2009) argued that cognitive understanding alone is insufficient to bring about intercultural learning in either teachers or their students, and that there is a lack of literature on the ‘how to’ of embedding intercultural competence development. Both groups of scholars, along with New Zealand-based Ward (2006), a leading social psychology researcher best known for her work on acculturation, recommend the use of existing evidence-based intercultural training resources, such as the EXCELL (Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning and Leadership) programme, to upskill academic staff to be effective intercultural educators.

EXCELL, co-developed by four applied psychologists in Australia and Canada, is an intercultural social skills training programme that builds on adult learning paradigms and employs an experiential learning approach to help individuals develop key generic social competencies for accessing a new culture and negotiating intercultural encounters (Mak et al., 1998; Mak et al., 1999). Originally developed as a counselling group/training programme to facilitate the cross-cultural adjustment of international students and other cultural sojourners (Mak, 2011), the EXCELL model has been successfully integrated into tertiary education curricula to enhance students’ cross-cultural competencies (Ho, Holmes & Cooper, 2004; Mak et al., 1999; Mak & Buckingham, 2007). The generic EXCELL social competencies (e.g. seeking help, making social contact) are likely to be vital for effective communication and working with cultural others in education in diverse disciplines and employment in different sectors (Barker & Mak, 2013).

The complete EXCELL programme requires four to six weekly sessions of two to three hours and involves teaching six key sociocultural competencies in five stages: Alliance Building; Cultural Mapping, Cultural Coaching, Contracting, and Transfer to Real Life (for details see Westwood et al., 2000). This amount of investment of class time is often impractical, and not justifiable where the purpose is to embed intercultural competence development in mainstream curricula. In a recent innovation in internationalising business curricula, Mak and Kennedy (2012) successfully trialled using only the alliance building and cultural mapping components of the EXCELL programme, to support individual academics to make curricular changes aimed at developing students’ cultural awareness and intercultural skills. The goal of the alliance building stage is to build trust within a group while validating group members’ original cultural background. If done successfully, it should foster participation and inclusion in the group. Cultural mapping is a schematic framework for making explicit a sequence of micro-verbal and non-verbal behaviours involved in intercultural interactions (Mak et al., 1998; Westwood et al., 2000). For example, group members could develop a ‘map’ outlining the steps involved in refusing a request in another culture, identifying the values and behaviours underlying this encounter. Cultural mapping involves breaking a dyadic interaction into four
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stages (Approach, Bridging, Commenting and Departing/Developing or ABCD), identifying verbal and non-verbal behaviours at each stage and underlying values. Examples of EXCELL cultural maps and further details regarding the ABCD stages are available from https://sites.google.com/site/internationalisationathome/professional-development

Recently, teachers within our psychology department have adapted alliance building and cultural mapping methods in order to teach cultural competencies to domestic psychology students with some initial evidence of its effectiveness (Knott, Mak & Neill, 2013; Mak, 2012). For example, Mak (2012) introduced cultural mapping exercises into the curriculum of an honours level health psychology course, in the contexts of stress reduction and patient-practitioner communication. Students mapped two challenging social scenarios involving making social contact and refusing a request, initially from the perspective of a cultural newcomer having to initiate conversation in a social gathering and to refuse a work supervisor’s request to work overtime (see Mak, 2012, for more detailed description of this activity). An evaluation of the course indicated that students agreed that they had gained greater awareness of cultural diversity and the role of culture in their chosen field of study. Knott et al. (2013) utilised both alliance building and cultural mapping activities in an introductory psychology course. At an end-of-semester survey, students reported enhanced cultural competence, particularly in relation to enjoying interaction with people from different cultures, being more conscious of and more prepared to adjust cultural knowledge used when interacting with cultural others, and gaining awareness of the role of culture in their chosen field of study.

While both these studies provide promising initial evidence of the effectiveness of EXCELL-based learning activities, they were limited in scope. Mak’s (2012) study involved a small sample (N=19) of motivated students in an selective Honours course and only implemented cultural mapping. Knott et al.’s study (2013) did not have a comparison group against which to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum changes.

This paper describes curriculum changes which built upon these previous studies and were designed to increase intercultural learning in a third year, capstone undergraduate social psychology course. Key topics in social psychology, such as self-concept formation, group identity, and helping behaviour, are strongly underpinned by cultural factors. Therefore, the study of social psychology provides a useful platform for intercultural learning within the context of its core curriculum. However, social psychology has traditionally been dominated by theories and research from the US and, to a lesser extent, Europe (Lee, Moghaddam & Harré, 2012) An inspection of many leading social psychology textbooks indicates that cultural social psychology or cross-cultural perspectives are increasingly included; however, this material is often included in a separate chapter (commonly the last one) rather than being embedded throughout the curriculum. In this paper, we describe two tutorial activities, based on alliance building and cultural mapping, that were designed to increase intercultural awareness, skills and learning in students in a final year social psychology course, and we report an initial evaluation of the effectiveness of these interventions.

Method

Participants

Participants were 51 students (80 per cent female) who were enrolled in a final year social psychology undergraduate course at an Australian university. The majority of students undertaking this course were in the final semester of their degree and about to either enter the workforce or pursue further professional training in psychology. Forty-eight were domestic students and three were international students. Of the domestic students, 77 per cent were Australian-born and 83 per cent indicated their ethnicity as

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Anglo-Australian or European. Participants’ ages ranged from 20 to 59 years ($M=27.5$, $SD=10.0$). The study received institutional ethics approval.

**Tutorial activities for intercultural learning**

This study incorporated the first two stages of the EXCELL programme for teaching sociocultural competencies (Mak et al., 1998; Westwood et al., 2000), namely, alliance building and cultural mapping, into the curriculum of the social psychology course. The curriculum changes also reflected the themes identified in the research by King et al. (2013); specifically, the activities involved direct encounters with others’ experiences, a safe environment in which to explore intercultural differences, and approaches to cultural learning which involved listening to others, exploring personal identity, personal reflections and empathy.

**Alliance Building:** Alliance Building involves strategies designed to encourage sharing within a group while validating the cultural backgrounds of the group members (Mak et al., 1998). We aimed to increase students’ awareness of culture, to validate students’ own cultural background and encourage communication within the group by building a safe environment where students could listen and observe, directly encounter others’ experiences and explore personal identity. In the introductory tutorial, students shared the ‘story’ of their name. In pairs, students interviewed each other regarding their names, what they meant and their history, with an emphasis on any cultural influences or meanings. Students then introduced their partner to the rest of the group and told the story of their name. Following this, students created ‘mind-schemas’ which represented their own self-schemas (Markus & Kitiyama, 2010) and discussed the cultural influences on the development of their self-concept and identity. A week after participating in this activity, students submitted a short learning journal entry reflecting upon what they had learnt through this tutorial.

**Cultural Mapping:** A tutorial four weeks after the alliance building exercise introduced the process of cultural mapping with the aim of developing knowledge and experiential skills for effective behaviours in cross-cultural contexts, specifically with reference to help-seeking behaviour. Students engaged in mapping the process of requesting help. Tutors modelled the EXCELL cultural mapping ABCD stages using a scenario of initiating conversation at a social gathering. Then, in groups of four, students were given two scenarios; one in which they imagined being an international student in Australia asking for help in locating a reference in the library, and one where they imagined themselves being in another country or culture and requesting help to find accommodation. Students identified both verbal and non-verbal behaviours at each stage of the interaction (ABCD) along with accompanying underlying cultural values. Participants had the opportunity to listen and observe, directly encounter others’ experiences and to empathise with others (by engaging in perspective taking). To enhance the experiential components of the learning, students then role-played the stages of the scenario for another group. Again, a week after participating in this activity, students submitted a short learning journal entry reflecting upon what they had learnt in this tutorial. Instructions used for both tutorial activities and templates for the cultural mapping exercise are available from: www.sites.google.com/site/internationalisationathome/home/curriculum-innovations

**Measures**

During their final tutorial for this course, 51 students completed a 13-item measure of intercultural learning adapted from MacNab and Worthley (2012) and Mak (2012). The items measured students’ perceptions of the development of their knowledge, skills and attitudes in intercultural relations through the social psychology course (see Table 1 for items). Of these 51 students, 37 were also
Table 1: Mean levels of agreement and percentage of participants agreeing with intercultural learning items for social psychology (N=48) and motivation and emotion (N=37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Soc. Psych.</th>
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<th>M &amp; E</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have developed a better understanding of cross-cultural interpersonal skills.</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>1.81 (0.73)</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>3.31 (1.19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have developed a greater awareness of cultural diversity.</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>1.83 (0.81)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>3.28 (1.16)</td>
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<td>I have gained awareness of the role of culture in my chosen field of study.</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>1.85 (0.88)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>3.17 (1.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am now more conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>1.92 (0.92)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>3.39 (1.08)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy interaction with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>1.94 (0.98)</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>2.97 (1.44)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am now more conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1.94 (0.95)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>3.39 (1.15)</td>
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<td>I am better prepared to adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from an unfamiliar culture.</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>2.00 (0.88)</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>3.43 (1.09)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have become more ready to make social contact with culturally different others.</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>2.35 (0.89)</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>3.31 (1.24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have become more comfortable participating in multicultural groups.</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>2.35 (0.89)</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>3.25 (1.25)</td>
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<td>I am now better equipped to enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>2.46 (0.97)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>3.50 (1.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am now more confident that I could socialise with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar.</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2.44 (0.90)</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3.54 (0.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am now more certain that I could deal better with adjusting to a culture that is new to me.</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>2.50 (0.88)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>3.50 (1.13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have become more confident with communicating with people from culturally different backgrounds.</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>2.52 (0.97)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>3.50 (1.16)</td>
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Note. Percentages are those who indicated Agree or Strongly Agree with items. Lower mean scores indicate greater agreement with items. Soc. Psych. = Social Psychology, M & E = Motivation and Emotion.

enrolled in another third year psychology course (motivation and emotion). These 37 students completed the same items with respect to their learning in the motivation and emotion course, allowing within-group comparisons to be made. Responses to the items were made on five-point scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree). Scores were averaged across items to form a reliable index of intercultural learning (Cronbach’s alpha=.93), with lower scores indicating higher perceived levels of learning.

In addition, there was an open-ended question that asked students to indicate ways in which they could apply the learning of intercultural competencies to their profession.

Results
Of the 51 students who completed the survey with respect to the social psychology course, data were analysed for 48 who were domestic students. Of these 48, there were 37 students who also completed the items with respect to another third year course (motivation and emotion). Table 1 presents levels of agreement with each survey item with respect to both courses. Mean levels of intercultural
learning in the social psychology course ($M=2.15, SD=.66$) were significantly different to the neutral mid-point (3) of the scale (one-sample $t(47)=-9.01, p<.001$, 95 per cent CI of difference $[-1.04, -.66]$), indicating that the students believed intercultural learning had occurred. In addition, students rated their intercultural learning as significantly greater in social psychology ($M=2.20, SD=0.70$) than motivation and emotion ($M=3.35, SD=1.07$), paired samples $t(35)=-6.46, p<.001$), a large effect (Cohen’s $d=-1.27$).

Nineteen valid responses were received from domestic students in response to the question regarding ways in which they could apply the learning of intercultural competencies to their profession. The majority (63 per cent) of responses indicated an increase in awareness and understanding of cultural differences had occurred. For example, one student commented that: ‘It has made me aware of multiculturalism and to be accepting and equal to all cultures.’ Another student wrote: ‘What I have learnt is already impacting my profession. I feel I have always been considerate and understanding, however now I have a greater understanding or consideration of why people may behave differently and have greater respect for these differences. I also understand that I am as equally bound by my cultural upbringing.’ Some participants also described an increased awareness of similarities. For example, a student commented: ‘I’ve learnt that there are a lot of similarities and differences between cultures and learnt to embrace them.’

Almost half of the responses (47 per cent) also referred to an increase in skills that could be applied in the workplace, such as patience, empathy, knowledge and acceptance. For example, one response stated: ‘In whatever place of employment there are going to be multicultural employees, clients etc., that need empathy – this unit has dealt with this, ultimately I feel equipped to deal with this.’ Another student said they had learnt about: ‘Being more mindful of cross-cultural difficulties such as language barriers. Being more patient with people from different cultures.’

Most (89 per cent) of the open-ended responses indicated positive perceptions of the cultural learning activities, with only 11 per cent indicating a neutral evaluation. These two responses were by students who had already engaged in student exchange (‘The learning about intercultural competence would have been helpful knowledge prior to my year abroad, but since I’ve already experienced a lot of the things we discussed in tutorials it was more a theoretical understanding to my experience.’) or had experience with others from varied cultural backgrounds (‘This unit has not really changed me as there isn’t [sic] a lot of international students in my class. I work with people from different backgrounds and I treat them the way I always have.’). This suggests that these types of activities may be most beneficial to those students who do not have other opportunities for intercultural contact.

**Discussion**

This paper describes activities introduced into the curriculum of a third year undergraduate social psychology course with the aim of enhancing intercultural awareness and competencies. The alliance building and cultural mapping activities were based on components of the EXCELL programme and previous applications in introductory and fourth year honours level psychology courses within the same psychology department (Knott et al., 2013; Mak, 2012). Students’ intercultural learning in the current study was enhanced via participation in this course and was significantly greater than in a comparable course that did not target intercultural learning. The activities were especially successful in raising cultural awareness and knowledge, but less so in developing cross-cultural skills. Similarly responses to the open-ended question indicated increases in awareness of cultural differences and, to a lesser extent, an increase in intercultural competencies and skills.

The alliance building activity was closely tied to an exploration of self-concept and cultural identity which are key topics in the undergraduate social psychology curriculum.
This activity allowed students to think about ‘who they are’ and consider the influence of cultural factors on the development of their self-concept and social identity. Some students indicated that they had not previously given much thought to their cultural background while others told rich stories regarding the origins and cultural significance of their names. The exercise allowed students to become aware of the cultural diversity in their class (which, at face value, may have appeared quite culturally homogenous). The activity also allowed students to have encounters with others’ experiences, to develop a safe environment to explore cultural differences, to build trust and to explore personal identity (as per King et al., 2013).

The cultural mapping exercise targeted helping behaviour, another key component of the social psychology curriculum, in cross-cultural contexts. This exercise allowed students to experience perspective taking and empathy, other variables identified as important for intercultural learning (King et al., 2013). This exercise is more skills-based and encourages experiential learning. The completion of learning journals following each of the activities allowed for personal reflection, which has been identified as important in the development of cultural competencies (Garvey, 2007) and intercultural learning (King et al., 2013).

The activities described in this paper represent an innovative and practical approach to promoting internationalisation at home and embedding intercultural competencies in the social psychology curriculum. The activities are relatively straightforward to implement, require few resources and connect well with existing curriculum in social psychology. They could also be readily applied to other core topics in the social psychology curriculum, such as intergroup contact and prejudice, while simultaneously providing a pathway to increased intercultural awareness.

The activities could also be adapted to suit other psychology courses (e.g. Knott et al., 2013; Mak, 2012). For example, alliance building activities could be used in personality psychology, with students introducing each other to the class in terms of one or two core personality traits and reflecting on how their interpretation of personality has been culturally influenced. These activities contribute to understanding and awareness of diversity, values, and ethical and social responsibility (identified as learning outcomes or graduate attributes by both the APA and APAC) and promote more generic interpersonal communication skills. The APA (2013) has identified communication as a learning goal for psychology graduates, including the ability to recognise the role of culture and values in communication, and the ability to interpret both language and nonverbal cues when interpreting meaning. Communication skills are a core graduate attribute for Australian psychology students including the ability to ‘adopt flexible techniques to communicate sensitively and effectively with diverse ethnic and cultural partners, including in the context of teamwork’ (Cranney et al., 2009, p.259).

Cultural mapping exercises lend themselves to courses that are skills based. There is an increasing need for future psychologists to be culturally competent and for development of the competencies to be embedded in professional training. Cultural mapping exercises can be used with trainee psychologists to map encounters with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (Mak & Brown, 2013). For example, students could map an initial session between a psychologist and a CALD client from the perspective of both the psychologist and the client, promoting an awareness of, and empathy for, cultural differences.

This study piloted curriculum changes and conclusions are limited by the relatively small sample size and lack of baseline measures of cultural knowledge and awareness. The evaluation tool referred to the entire course and did not specifically measure participants’ responses to the alliance building and cultural mapping activities (although students reflected on each of these in their learning journals). Future research could evaluate these two activities.
separately and employ pre-intervention baseline measures of key variables. In addition, intercultural competence could be assessed in an ongoing fashion from the first year of a psychology programme through to graduate studies (Deardorff, 2006). Measures more sensitive to different aspects of intercultural learning (e.g. cultural awareness, knowledge, communication skills and empathy) could be used in addition to the more generic intercultural learning measure employed in this study. It has been suggested that because intercultural competence is a complex construct, it should ideally be assessed via multiple methods (Deardorff, 2006). These would ideally include assessment items, such as e-portfolios, critical reflection, interviews and focus groups, in addition to quantitative measures (Deardorff, 2011). A qualitative analysis of the students’ learning journal entries in this course would lend further insight into the nature of students’ intercultural learning. It is possible that responses to survey items in this study were subject to social desirability bias or demand characteristics, reflecting implied expectations of the situation rather than actual learning. However, the delay between participation in the activities and collection of survey data should have ameliorated such demand characteristics.

Conclusions

Whilst research in intercultural learning development as a vital aspect of internationalising of psychology students at home is still in its infancy, there is growing evidence of the effectiveness of using the EXCELL approach (Knott et al., 2013; Mak, 2012) and this paper adds to that evidence. The current study builds upon the previous research by providing a stronger test of the effectiveness of the curriculum changes via comparisons with another course and by applying the methods to another area of the psychology curriculum. Our own observations from implementing these activities in the classroom indicate that students readily engaged with both alliance building and cultural mapping. There is a need for further research to evaluate the efficacy of activities such as these for enhancing intercultural learning and providing viable alternatives to study abroad programmes as a method for internationalising the experiences of domestic students. In particular, the efficacy of curriculum changes needs to be assessed across the entire breadth of a programme rather than only in individual subject offerings. Challenges for curriculum changes, like those described in this paper, are engaging faculty in the process and subsequently sustaining changes once they have been implemented. There is a need to provide ongoing training and support to staff implementing changes. Likewise, there is a need to embed intercultural learning throughout entire psychology programmes, from first year through to graduate studies. This requires a consistent approach, development of evidence-based tools (such as those described here) and support at the faculty, university and professional level.

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