



Preparing occupational therapy students to work with First Peoples of Australia: A mixed methods study

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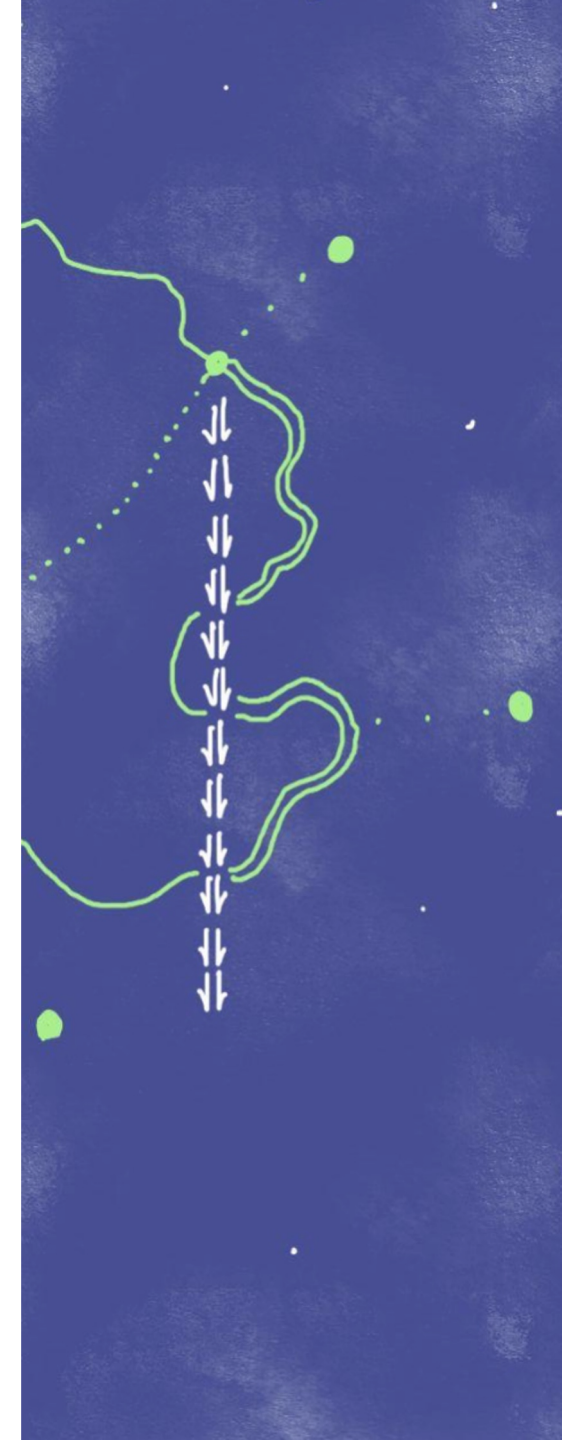
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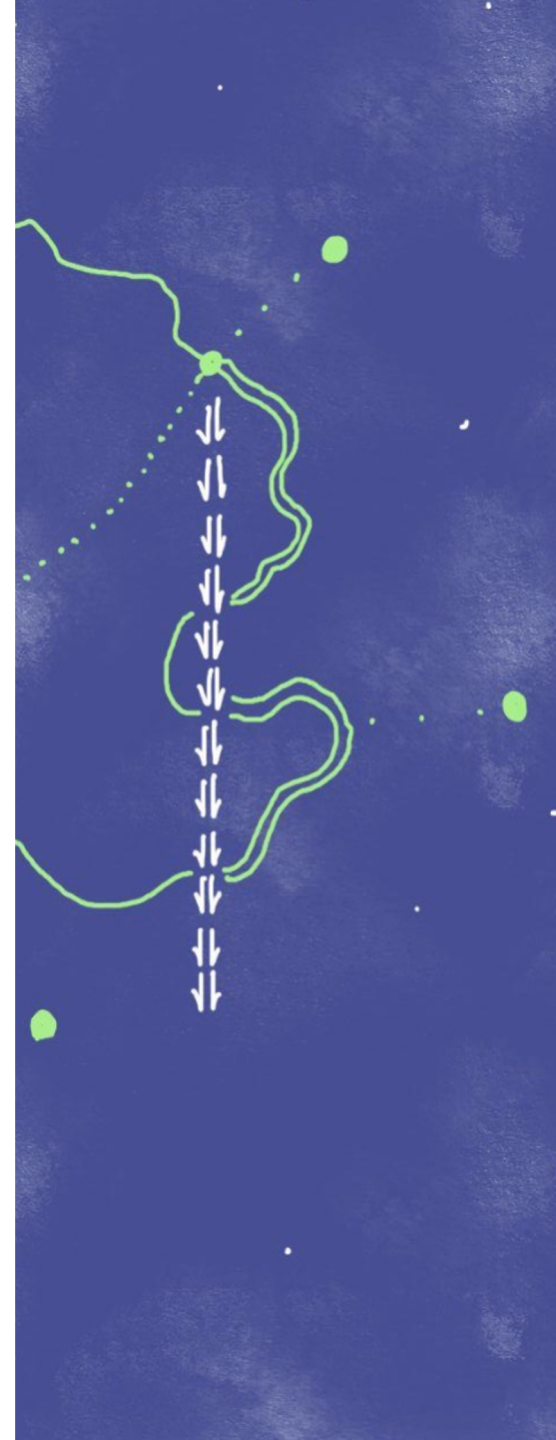
Background

- **Health inequities exist for First Nations peoples** within Australia [1].
- Ensuring occupational therapy graduates can practice in a culturally safe manner is an important aspect of **addressing inequities** [1-4].
- University programs play a **critical role** in helping students to develop such skills [3,5].
- The Cultural Capability Measurement Tool (CCMT) identifies whether curricula can develop student health professionals' cultural capability [6] but **has yet to be used to specifically measure student occupational therapists' cultural capability.**



Objectives

- 1) To map the development of occupational therapy students' cultural capability to work with First Nations peoples,
- 2) To explore what aspects of the program are contributing to the development of students' cultural capability to work with First Nations peoples.



Context

Griffith University 4-year Bachelor with Honours Degree.

First Nations perspectives and content is included in the program through three avenues:

1. Integration into all occupational therapy courses,
2. Inclusion of an occupational therapy course with a particular **focus on First Nations content**, &
3. A **specific First Nations course** offered to all health disciplines within the university.

Methods

Sequential mixed methods approach

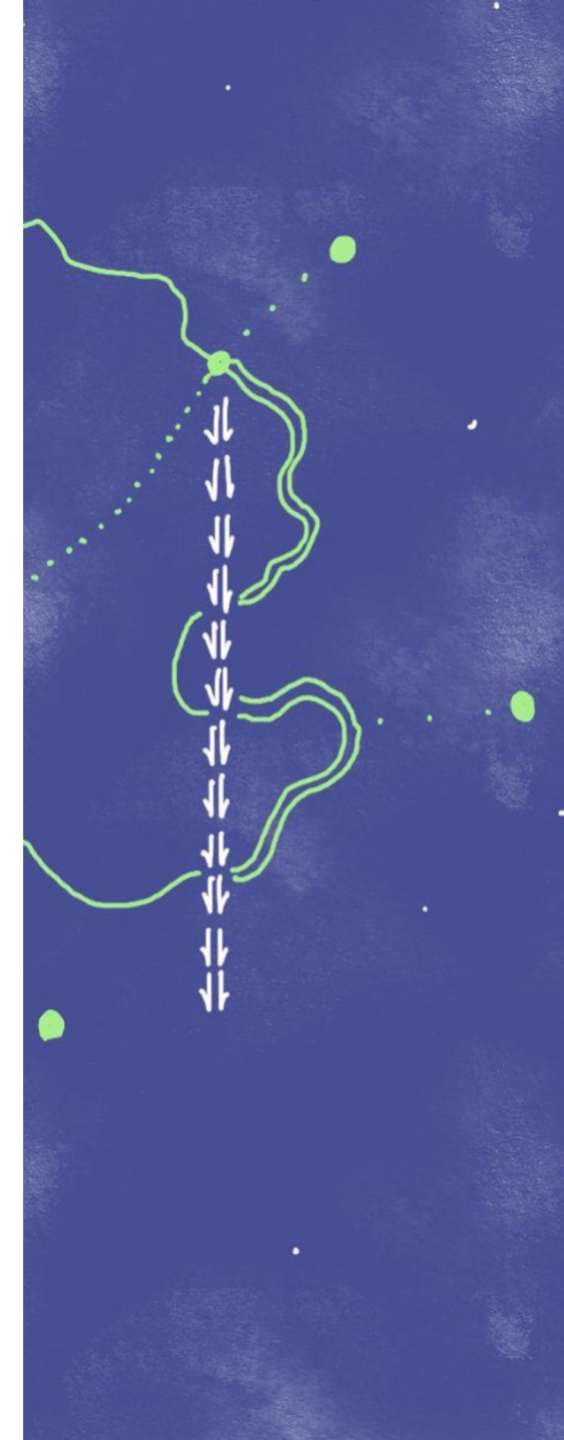
Quantitative Survey → *Qualitative Focus Groups*

- Demographic information
- Cultural capability measurement tool (CCMT) [6]
- Two open-ended questions

Yarning facilitated by a First Nations research assistant

Data Analysis

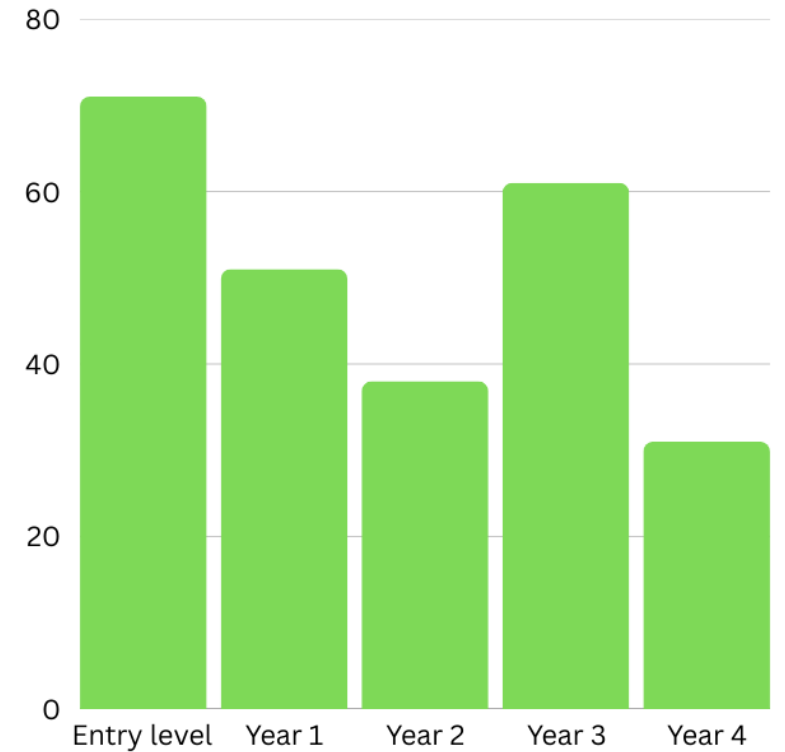
- Descriptive statistics & non-parametric statistics to explore group differences
- Braun & Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis [7].



Results - Demographics

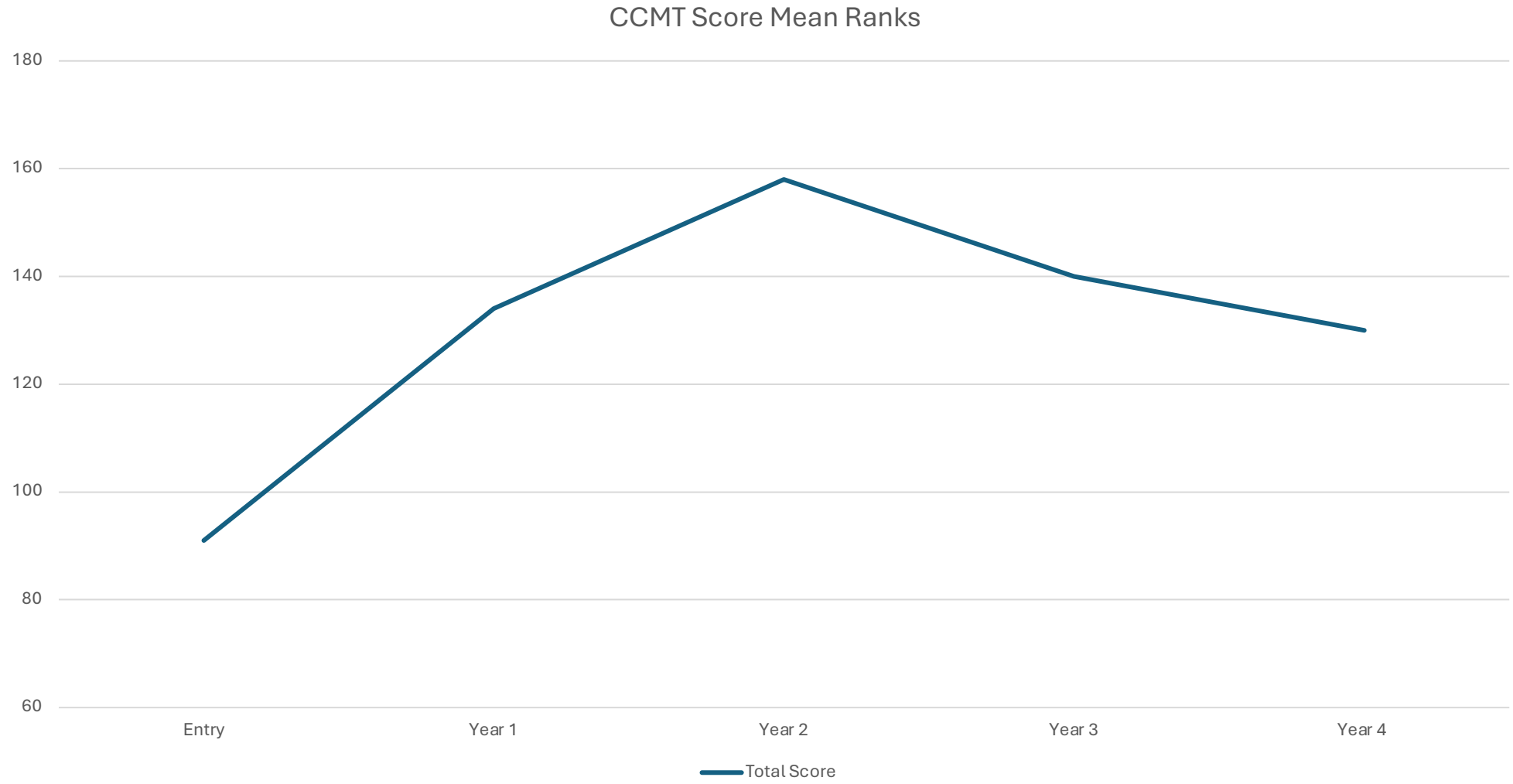
Participants (n = 252)

- Response rate 57%
- Mean age 22.94 (SD 6.7) years
- 226 (90%) Female
- 5 (2%) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 53 (21%) identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse



Participants (n) per year level

Results – Survey



Results – Focus Groups (n = 10 participants)

THEME ONE

Intentionality of teaching and curriculum design

“...having opportunities in different assignments to choose to focus more on [First Nations]” (Eden).

“...that with the whole program...you’ve kind of built these broad principles about cultural capability and interacting with First [Nations Peoples].” (Crystal)

“...environment that is safe, academics are really good at creating that environment” (Rose)

Results – Focus Groups (n = 10 participants)

THEME TWO

Authentic learning experiences are preferred

“I think ultimately at uni...it feels a bit inauthentic. It's like ‘Oh, we're just gonna practice and say this’, but would we actually do this in real life? Like you wouldn't say it so rigidly and everything.” (Eden)

“...it seems odd to me that we don't talk about the lots of people who aren't really embedded or really expressive of their identity and their culture because they might still be learning themselves because of the history”. (Todd)

“People who come and talk about their experiences has been one of the greatest learning experiences for me during class. I love hearing stories and their personal lives. And it has a lot of depth to it...There's so much to it that you can't really get from readings or lectures.” (Jessica)

Results – Focus Groups (n = 10 participants)

THEME THREE

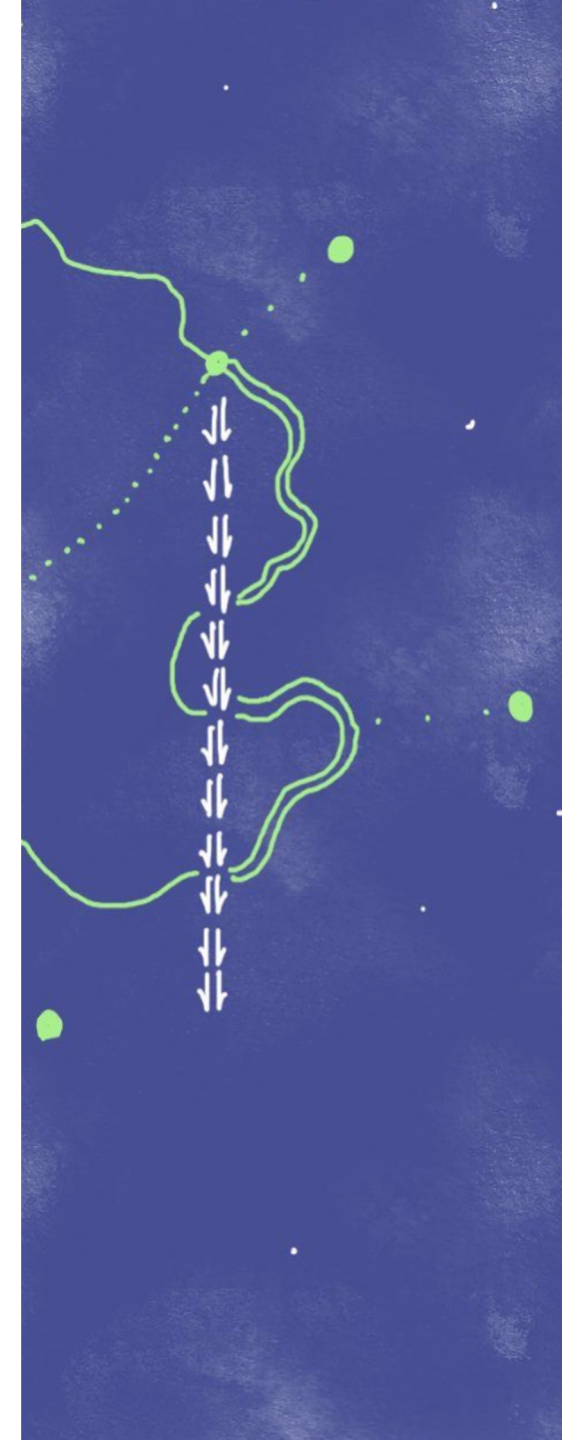
Preaching to the converted

Todd spoke of his “close relationships with people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” and how these had “been very beneficial to not only [his] understanding, but [his] life in general.”

“a positive [from their studies] was to break down barriers and stigma around there being this separation between Australians and First Nations” (Anna)

Discussion and Implications

- Importance of tertiary education providers to be aware of **knowledge and understanding levels of incoming students**.
- Possible link between **decline in CCMT scores and increased awareness of culturally safe practice** being a lifelong journey of learning and exploration.
- Scaffolding within the program appeared to **support critical reflection**.
- Clear preference and impact of **authentic learning experiences**:
 - First Nations Peoples need to be provided with opportunities and appropriate support to pursue academic roles.



References

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