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Building friendship through a cross-cultural mentoring program



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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the efficacy of a short-term mentoring program in building cross-cultural friendships between students at an Australian university. Using a quasi-experimental approach, our study found that the mentoring program (Local Aussie Mentoring Program—LAMP) increased cross-cultural interactions for mentees, but not for mentors. About 45% of both mentors and mentees wished to continue their relationship with mentoring partners after the completion of the mentoring requirements. Mentees spent significantly more time with cross-ethnic friends than did controls after the completion of LAMP. We examined whether multicultural aspects of personality, as measured by the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), would positively correlate with cross-cultural mentoring effectiveness and cross-cultural friendship interactions (the dependent variables). Multicultural personality aspects of mentors (as measured by the MPQ) had significant positive relationships with both mentee and mentor-rated mentoring measures. All mentor MPQ scales showed some significant but small and positive relationships, with mentor friendship items, particularly Open-mindedness, Cultural Empathy and Emotional Stability. We found a significant, positive relationship between mentee Cultural Empathy and Social Initiative with cross-cultural friendship. These results show some partial support for a positive relationship between MPQ scales and cross-ethnic friendships.

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1. Introduction

Making the transition to university studies is demanding for most students, with international students facing particular challenges. Like others, international students are faced with a new institution, new courses and new expectations, but for many their accepted cultural assumptions, and often even their language-of-origin are no longer instrumental to success. Further, the social supports that local students readily access, in terms of friendships and associated social networks, are difficult or impossible for many international students to access. It was in the light of these problems that we developed the Local Aussie Mentor Program (LAMP) to address difficulties identified in previous research surrounding the low level of interactions between local and international students enrolled at an Australian university (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Tompson & Tompson 1996). The LAMP program is a three-session, cross-cultural peer mentoring program embedded within an undergraduate Human Resource Management training and development course, where student mentors are

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matched with newly arrived international students (mentees). We evaluated the program in terms of its efficacy in building cross-cultural friendships as a dependent variable. We also explored whether multicultural aspects of personality, as measured by the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) has any impact on cross-cultural peer mentoring (a further dependent variable).

In this paper, we introduce the LAMP program and then examine some of the issues that affect the low rate of interaction between international and domestic students in a university environment. We then describe the theoretical basis for our research, highlighting the role of personality in intercultural situations. Next, we examine the issue of how intercultural programs may help improve intercultural interactions, focusing particularly on the efficacy of intercultural peer mentoring. Finally, we explore the method and results of the study, followed by a discussion on the meaning of the results.

1.1. *The LAMP program*

We designed the LAMP program to help international students to adjust to life within a university in Brisbane, Australia. In common with a large number of other Australian and international universities, many of this university's students come from outside the host country. The Business School where LAMP was conducted has 4800 students, over half of whom are classed as international students, coming from more than 100 different countries. This presents challenges to not only the international and local students, but also to the university as a higher education provider. Results on the 'International Student Barometer', a comprehensive report on international student experiences and opinions conducted at the university, reflected the scale of this challenge. For example, in 2009, about 30% of international students reported dissatisfaction with their extent of their friendships with Australian students at the university ([International Student Barometer \(ISB\), 2009](#)), and in particular, 36% of Chinese international students were dissatisfied with this aspect of student life. Further, students did not form diverse group memberships by choice, nor did they engage in social interaction in activities outside of the university ([International Student Barometer \(ISB\), 2009](#)). These results demonstrate that international students at the university do not feel their intercultural experience is optimal, but also raise questions about the nature of the university experience for local/domestic students.

One of the graduate attributes of this University is for all graduates to develop competence in interacting in culturally diverse and international environments. Many universities today desire for their students to be 'global citizens'—a much touted, albeit contested concept ([Barker, Hibbins, & Woods, 2012](#); [Roman, 2003](#)). The term global citizenship could be defined as the capacity of individuals to adapt to different people, cultures and environments throughout the world; and the ability to manage this interconnectedness harmoniously and productively ([Barker et al., 2012](#)). It would seem that an immediate way to develop intercultural awareness and competence would be to interact with classmates who come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Consequently, in order to build bridges of intercultural friendship and respect, as well as assist with transition to the university of international students, the research team proposed the LAMP program initiative to match domestic and international students in mentoring partnerships. Mentors came from within a second year Human Resource Management Training and Development course that formed part of the undergraduate program in the Business School. We embedded the mentoring program for the mentors into the existing curriculum and assessment of the undergraduate course. The training and development course coached students in appropriate mentoring skills. However, the mentees would be volunteers participating in their own time. We structured the interaction between mentors and mentees to include training in interpersonal skills and an introduction to the university academic and online environment in the context of the broader Australian culture.

1.1.1. *Background*

Cultural adjustment has been defined as the social and psychological ability of individuals or cultural groups to operate effectively within the new cultural environment in which they now reside ([Adelman, 1988](#)). Researchers such as [Woods \(2007\)](#) and [Ujitani and Volet \(2008\)](#) argue that adjustment is a mutual process involving both the international student and the local student—both have to adapt to each other, although it is often assumed it is only the international student who needs to adapt. This emphasis on mutual processes means that successful cultural adaptation results from a series of actions of strengthening inter-relationships through reciprocal exchange and mutual adjustment of culture and environment ([Mio, Trimble, Arrendondo, & Cheatham, 1999](#), p. 5). With this in mind, our research assessed intercultural friendships from the perspectives of both the international student and the local student.

The low rate of intercultural interaction between international students and domestic students has concerned international educators and researchers for some time ([Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004](#); [Halualani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, & Dodge, 2004](#); [International Student Barometer \(ISB\), 2009](#); [Pitts, 2009](#)). Low intercultural interaction undermines both the educational value for the international students of attending an overseas university, but it also fails to capitalize on the potential for diversity awareness for locally born students ([Halualani et al., 2004](#); [Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000](#)). Consequently, competencies developed through intercultural interaction such as intercultural communication skills, interpersonal skills and confidence in interacting with students different from themselves (through multicultural group assignments) remain undeveloped ([Hibbins & Barker, 2011](#); [Pitts, 2009](#); [Ujitani & Volet, 2008](#)).

[Robertson et al. \(2000\)](#) identified some of the difficulties facing international students when attempting to build friendships with local students. Two major challenges identified by international students in Australia related to understanding colloquial English and feelings of isolation. [Tompson and Tompson \(1996\)](#) surveyed business faculties in the US and identified

patterns of international student behaviors that were undermining academic performance. In particular, they highlighted international students' low participation and tendency to interact only with fellow international students. This finding meshes with that of Krause, Hartley, James, and McInnis (2005), who reported that, compared to domestic students, first year international students exhibited less social integration. Thus, a number of problems facing international students seem related to a lack of interaction with local students, requiring new approaches for their resolution.

Although these problems are particularly pertinent to international students, resulting in sub-optimal university experiences, they also affect local students but in less obvious ways. The most notable consequence for local students is their failure to realize the benefits of building intercultural friendships with international students (Trice, 2004). Given the increasing internationalization of work, trade, education and culture, this represents a major opportunity foregone, both for the students as individuals, for universities seeking to develop graduates as 'global citizens' (Barker et al., 2012; Shallcross & Robinson, 2006), and for the host country. Consequently, the potential benefits of high quality interactions between international and local students are of great value to all stakeholders.

Unfortunately, merely encouraging or arranging contact between students appears to be an insufficient response to the issue. For example, in a qualitative study, Halualani et al. (2004) described how students from an ethnically diverse university assumed they engaged in many intercultural interactions, but many of these interactions appeared to be quite superficial. Further, many students reported they had little opportunity to develop an understanding of ways that cultures differ. Similarly, Volet & Ang (1998) lamented that interactions between local Australian and international students from Asian backgrounds are rather minimal, despite the internationalization of Australian campuses and potential for mutual intercultural learning.

One interesting research is whether the strength of the cultural gap between international and host national students was negatively associated with the frequency of social interaction between local and international students (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). When international students lack sufficient culture-specific knowledge about how to interact in the host culture, they rely on their home country values to interpret, evaluate and behave in the new culture (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). To the extent that these values are not shared by the host culture, international students experience adjustment difficulties (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Ward and Searle's (1991) study of 155 sojourners in New Zealand also found that a lack of relevant cultural knowledge is a significant predictor of social difficulty in the host country. In subsequent research, Ward (1996) argued that socio-cultural adjustment for acculturating individuals (including international students) depends on factors such as the length of residence, knowledge of the host culture, language proficiency and cultural identity. However, one factor Ward particularly emphasized was the degree of interaction that international students had with host nationals, which facilitates many of the other factors. In fact, the degree of interaction between international students had with host nationals could be regarded as both an indicator and facilitator of socio-cultural adjustment. For example, an international student with little knowledge of the host country culture can, therefore, more rapidly learn about the host culture if country nationals provide a 'bridge' of cultural understanding. Ideally, such a bridge should bring local and international students together in an environment of mutual cultural learning accompanied by an attitude of mutual respect.

A number of programs, such as the Excell Intercultural Skills Program (Mak & Barker, 2004; Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, & Barker, 1999), have been established to facilitate intercultural competency development and to enhance intercultural interactions on multicultural university campuses. However, implementing these programs has been difficult in the current university environment in Australia unless these programs are embedded in the curriculum (see Barker, Troth, & Mak, 2002; Mak & Buckingham, 2007 for examples), as local students spend increasingly less time on campus and are less likely to commit to campus-organized, extra-curricular activities (Woods, Barker, & Daly, 2004). Since local students are spending more time in part-time work and more time studying at home with technology-assisted-learning (James, Bexley, Devlin, & Marginson, 2007), we sought to explore alternative ways of building bridges of intercultural understanding between local and international students.

1.1.2. Intercultural pedagogy

Previous research has examined the effectiveness of intercultural pedagogy in increasing cross-cultural friendships amongst university students. Mak and Buckingham (2007) examined the effect on communication of undergraduates enrolled in a first year academic course at an Australian university, of the Excell socio-cultural competency training program. They found that students who completed the program reported an increase in the time they spent with friends from other ethnic backgrounds, compared with control group peers in the same course. Furthermore, the students in the Excell program showed increased levels of social self-efficacy and social interaction skills, whereas the control group showed no improvement. Thus, it is possible to produce measurable changes in the intercultural adaptation of international students.

Therefore, while programs targeted in skills training is optimal, often such intercultural bridges will not arise naturally, without some degree of institutional assistance. For example, Pedersen (2010) found that overseas study experience alone does not sufficiently foster the growth of intercultural effectiveness. In comparing students who studied abroad, students who were specifically trained using intercultural pedagogy showed greater intercultural development (as measured by the Intercultural Development Inventory) than those who did not receive such training (Pedersen, 2010). Therefore, if a goal of international mobility programs is to achieve intercultural effectiveness, then embedding intercultural pedagogy as part of an overseas sojourn into pre-departure orientation or other induction programs would appear to facilitate this process (Pedersen, 2010). Similar findings were obtained in Ward and Searle's (1991) study, where intercultural pedagogy and

amount of contact with co- and host-nationals predicted later intercultural adjustment. Although providing inter-cultural training programs is helpful, addressing the isolation and loneliness experienced by international students should also be useful in assisting international students' cultural adjustment.

1.1.3. *Ethnically-matched peer mentoring as a bridge*

Several researchers have utilized peer mentoring to assist in ameliorating problems of student adjustment (Santos & Reigadas, 2002; Sanchez, Bauer, & Paronto, 2006), however few programs have addressed the dual goals of improving both intercultural interactions and facilitating transition to university. This type of approach appears to be useful, as indicated by Best, Hajzler, and Henderson, 2007 who used primarily qualitative data to evaluate an online peer-mentoring program, and found their program helpful for the mentees' transition to university. Mentees in this program reported that they had learned about Australian university language issues, assessment issues, social relationship issues and living costs, and to adjust their expectations about studying in Australia. In a similar study, Santos and Reigadas (2002) found that participation in their peer-mentoring program enhanced Latino student participants' self-efficacy and academic goal definition. However, both of these studies used ethnically-matched peer mentoring, making it difficult to determine whether it was the ethnic matching or the mentoring, or some combination of these factors that mentees found useful. This is a significant issue given that it is often difficult to match students based on their ethnicity. It is important to explore the effects of non-ethnically matched mentoring on the development of cross-cultural friendships, particularly in a program designed to bridge the cultural divide between local and international students. Thus, the current research adds to this literature by examining a peer mentoring program for international students that does not rely on matching students of the same ethnicity.

1.1.4. *Multicultural personality questionnaire and peer mentoring*

The use of peer-mentoring is only one of the factors that could contribute to the intercultural adaptation of international students. A different contributor suggested by some researchers is that low intercultural interactions are related to personality factors (Leong, 2007; Margavio, Hignite, Moses, & Margavio, 2005; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). For example, using the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ: Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001), Leong (2007), found that certain personality factors predict the nature of successful intercultural interactions. As its name suggests, the MPQ assesses an individual's cross-cultural sensitivity and ability to handle stressful, intercultural experiences as the critical dimensions of multicultural competence (Leong, 2007). Specifically, the MPQ assesses the following constructs: Cultural empathy (CE) measures the ability to empathise with the feelings, thoughts and behaviors or individuals from a different cultural background; Open-mindedness (O) assesses an open and unprejudiced attitude toward different groups and toward different cultural norms and values; Emotional stability (ES) examines the tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus a tendency to show strong emotional reactions under stressful circumstances; Social initiative (SI) is a tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiatives; and Flexibility (F) is a tendency to regard new and unknown situations as a challenge and to adjust one's behavior to the demands of new and unknown situations.

Leong (2007) showed that students with international study experience performed better with respect to intercultural effectiveness. In that study, Leong (2007) followed two groups of Singaporean undergraduate university students. The first group attended an international exchange program in Western countries (European countries, North American countries, Australia and New Zealand) or other Asian countries (of which half were located in non-English speaking countries). The control group comprised Singaporean students studying in their home country. Both samples were concurrently surveyed, before and after the exchange program, using the MPQ and the socio-cultural adaptation scale. After the exchange program, post-test measures (T2) indicated exchange students' higher ratings on most intercultural dimensions. Further, exchange students scoring high on the SI dimension showed low levels of sociocultural and psychological difficulties (Leong, 2007). In a similar study, Margavio et al. (2005) administered the MPQ to 244 students from a large mid-Western US university attending an information systems course. The researchers asked students to disclose information of intentions to travel internationally, interest in international work, international coursework and general multicultural experience. Relevant to the current study, the researchers found those individuals who had taken part in international coursework, were raised in non-traditional environments or who had previous multicultural experience scored higher on the MPQ. Thus, both Leong (2007) and Margavio et al. (2005) provided evidence of personality factors that can influence successful multicultural interactions. The current study utilizes the MPQ to examine the effectiveness of peer mentoring.

1.2. *LAMP (Local Aussie Mentoring Program) implementation*

Given the context of previous research outlined above, we sought to explore two related questions associated with implementation of LAMP. Firstly, this research tested an alternative model for mentoring international students, one that did not rely on ethnic matching of mentors and mentees. Secondly, we wanted to test whether the students' personalities, as assessed by the MPQ, affected the outcomes of mentoring for international students. Given that previous research seemed to indicate that it was the mentoring rather than the matching that made most difference to mentee outcomes, it was hypothesized that:

H1. Cross-cultural mentoring would aid the development of intercultural friendships for international students.

Within applied research such as this, it is not possible to randomize participation, leaving the possibility that confounding factors may account for differences between research and control groups. In this case, one of the key outcomes for LAMP was

the increased involvement of mentees with people from ethnic groups other than their own, so it was further hypothesized that:

H2. Cross-cultural mentoring would increase the involvement of mentees with people from other ethnic groups, after controlling for prior involvement with people from other ethnic groups.

As outlined previously, one of the contributing factors to mentoring effectiveness appears to be the cross-cultural aspects of the people involved, both mentors and mentees. Consequently, it was also hypothesized that cross-cultural aspects of both mentors and mentees, as assessed by the MPQ, would be associated with mentoring outcomes, as follows:

H3. Each of the cross-cultural aspects of mentor personality, as measured by the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), would positively correlate with cross-cultural mentoring effectiveness and cross-cultural friendship interactions.

H4. Each of the cross-cultural aspects of mentee personality measured by the MPQ would positively correlate with cross-cultural mentoring effectiveness and cross-cultural friendship interactions.

2. Method

As part of the practical and assessable component of a second year training and development course, students were required to mentor a first year student. The training and development students, hereafter referred to as the mentors, studied at either of two campuses, one based in the city and the other at a regional centre. At the regional campus, the international students (hereafter referred to as mentees) came from the first year of the same Bachelor of Business program as the mentors, while at the city campus, the mentees were drawn from an affiliated, adjacent pre-university college.

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. Mentees

Mentees came from two sources, the first being a pool of pre-university college first year Management students, most of whom would be attending the university in the following year, while the second pool consisted of students in a first year course in an undergraduate program at the university.

2.1.2. Mentee control group

For logistical reasons data could only be collected from the city campus for mentees. Questionnaires were collected from 163 students in total, of whom 89 were mentored and the remaining 67 were a control group, while 7 students gave ambiguous information so that they could not be clearly classified as controls or mentees. The control group comprised 67 students in the same cohort and same classes as the mentees. The controls were not taking part in mentoring, either because they were absent at the time of matching, or because they elected not to participate actively as mentees. There were no significant differences between mentees and control group on age, MPQ scales, and any time one (T1) measures of English fluency or academic self-efficacy.

2.1.3. Mentors

As mentioned, all students in the second-year training and development course were required as part of their coursework to mentor a first year student. Students who did not wish to mentor a student were given an alternative learning and assessment activity. Participation in the data collection, however, was voluntary, in line with ethics requirements, and 107 mentors participated in the program. The greater number of mentors (107) compared to mentees (89) is due to two mentors being assigned to one mentee in a few cases.

2.2. Characteristics of the sample

The 163 pre-university college students (mentees) completing questionnaires had a mean age of 21.19 years ($SD = 2.54$), with 54.9% of the sample being male, and 90.4% enrolled as international students. The mean age of the mentors in the sample was 22.64 years ($SD = 4.161$), with a lower proportion of males, 37.5%, than among the mentees, and 40.5% enrolled as international students.

International students dominated the pre-university college sample of mentees (90.4%), with 34.8% of the sample born in China, and only 5.6% born in Australia. Two of the Australian born pre-university college students reported having first languages other than English, while nine of the students speaking English as a first language reported Asian or African ethnicity. Of the pre-university college students who answered the question about duration of stay in Australia (T1), a mean of 20.6 months ($SD = 29.7$) was recorded.

Among the mentors in the sample, international students comprised 37.2% at the city campus, and 46.7% at the regional campus. Mentors born outside of Australia (international students) reported a mean period of 66.8 months ($SD = 76.2$) in Australia. Amongst the mentors were 16 exchange students in their first semester in Australia.

Among the mentees (pre-university college students), English was the first language for only 6.7%, with Chinese speakers as the largest language group (44.8%). Significant languages among the pre-university college sample include Chinese (31.1%), Korean, (18.6%), Cantonese (9.3%), Japanese (6.2%) and Mandarin (5.0%). We used an open-ended question regarding language and consequently, Chinese language could be referring to Mandarin, Cantonese or another Chinese dialect. Among the

Table 1
Reliability of MPQ scales by groups.

MPQ scales		Mentees	Mentors
Cultural empathy (CE)	Alpha	0.691	0.687
	No. of cases	125	105
Open-mindedness (O)	Alpha	0.733	0.714
	No. of cases	124	107
Social initiative (SI)	Alpha	0.692	0.780
	No. of cases	123	104
Emotional stability (ES)	Alpha	0.356	0.652
	No. of cases	116	103
Flexibility (F)	Alpha	0.442	0.704
	No. of cases	124	103

mentors, 51.5% of overall respondents reported speaking English as a first language, with Chinese languages being the first language of 11.8% of the sample.

2.2.1. Cross-cultural mentoring pairs

We identified cross-cultural mentoring peers by considering pairs that differed on first language group, or ethnicity or region of birth. Of the 63 matched mentoring pairs who responded to items on first language, we identified 15 pairs as sharing first language group, while 11 pairs shared languages and ethnicity. Taken together, the overwhelming majority of mentoring pairs (52 out of 63) were cross-cultural.

2.3. Procedure

The mentors were required to meet with their mentees for at least three times for one hour within a five-week period. We provided mentors with recommended activities and discussion points for these three compulsory sessions. The suggested framework included: (1) developing a mentoring relationship and goal setting; (2) introduction to the university resources including websites; (3) transition to life as a university student, including opportunities to discuss strategies to deal with issues concerning cultural differences. For mentors we provided in-class training on mentoring, including the application of the recommended activities and discussion points, and we placed supporting materials on the training and development course website.

Matching of mentors and mentees was undertaken within the classes the mentees were attending. The mentors had been invited to attend classes, so the researchers could facilitate a process of meeting and introductions. This gave mentors and mentees the opportunity to get to know each other at least a little prior to choosing who they wanted to work with. In other words, mentors and mentees chose their own mentoring partners: they were not assigned a partner. After choosing their partners, mentors were asked to exchange contact details with mentees and to provide a copy to the research team.

2.4. Measures

The questionnaires were administered to both mentors and mentees at the start of the mentoring program and again at the end. Approximately 50% of mentors and 40% of mentees did not complete the post-program questionnaire. Thus, the research used a quasi-experimental design, so caution is necessary when attempting to draw causal inferences.

2.4.1. Personality measures

We used the 40-item version of the MPQ (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001), a culturally-relevant personality scale that was described in the introduction. A number of studies have validated the longer version of the MPQ (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000; Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002) whereas only two studies have utilized the 40-item version (Brown & Daly, (2005); Woods, 2007). In this study, the internal reliabilities of these scales, as assessed using Cronbach's (1949) alpha, are presented in Table 1. These indicated that two of the MPQ scales (ES and F) had unacceptable internal reliability among the mentees, and consequently, were not used in any of the analyses reported in the Results section.

2.4.2. Friendship items

As a dependent variable for this research, we assessed friendship using four items developed by Mak and Buckingham (2007). These items ask students to rate how many close friends they have within their ethnic group or from other ethnic groups, and how much time they spend with friends from within their own group, or from other ethnic groups. Each item was rated on a verbally-labeled five-point scale, with number of friends rated from none to many, while time spent with friends was rated from 0 to 1 h, to >15 h per week.

Table 2
Factor loadings on first factor of mentoring measures (mentee example).

Mentor behaviors	Mentee MMIT1	Mentee MMIT2	Mentee MMET2	Mentor SEMI	Mentor SEME
A mentor is someone who . . .					
1. Makes me feel relaxed during peer mentoring sessions	.497	.568	.358	.729	.597
2. Gives me practical advice on how to attain desirable outcomes as a first year student	.650	.634	.734	.684	.740
3. Pushes me beyond my current 'comfort zone' in order to encourage me to develop new skills	.633	.729	.821	.604	.567
4. Provides support and encouragement	.756	.755	.839	.764	.785
5. I can informally interact with at university outside of peer mentoring sessions	.471	.653	.777	.641	.678
6. Shares ideas and provide feedback to assist me to achieve my academic/career objectives	.734	.769	.812	.808	.820
7. Helps me to learn about and connect with other important parts of the university	.684	.717	.793	.645	.731
8. I can identify with	.539	.728	.796	.614	.709
9. Provides a forum in which I am encouraged to talk openly about my concerns	.696	.601	.751	.727	.715
10. Demonstrates good listening skills in our conversations	.596	.711	.805	.705	.749
11. Provides insights from his/her past experiences to protect me from making mistakes	.677	.732	.864	.545	.755
12. Conveys empathy for the concerns and feelings that I discuss with him/her	.676	.759	.814	.653	.823
13. Conveys feelings of respect for me as an individual conveys respect	.617	.764	.819	.767	.698
Cronbach's Alpha	.874	.914	.933	.904	.923
N	125	107	68	70	62

Note: Mentee MMIT1 = Mentee Mentoring Measures Importance T1; Mentee MMIT2 = Mentee Mentoring Measures Importance T2; Mentee MMET2 = Mentee Mentoring Measures Effectiveness T2; Mentor SEMI = Mentor Self-Evaluation Mentoring Measures Importance; Mentor SEME = Mentor Self-Evaluation Mentoring Measures Effectiveness.

2.4.3. Mentoring measures

As further dependent variables for this research, mentoring measures were adapted from Muckert (2002), a 28-item Evaluation of Functions fulfilled by Peer Mentors Scale, based on the work of Ragins and McFarlin (1990). Muckert (2002) established one factor account for 62% of the variance among the items on this scale.

For this research, we reduced Muckert's scale to 13 items by using only the items that loaded most highly on this single factor in Muckert's analysis, in order to improve saliency and clarity of the scale. At time 1 (T1), mentees were asked to respond to the Mentoring Measure 13 item scale only in terms of how important they viewed each of these functions to be (see Table 2). At time 2 (T2), these 13 items were presented twice and participants were asked to assess them with respect to the items' importance (how important mentoring was to the participant), and secondly in terms of effectiveness (whether the mentoring they had experienced met perceived needs). In addition, a set of these items was used to assess mentors at time 2, by asking the mentors to self-evaluate both the importance of mentoring for them and their perceived effectiveness in terms of the same 13-item set of mentoring functions. Therefore, the Mentoring Measure was used as an outcome measure at time 2 for both mentees and mentors. Factor analysis of all versions of the mentoring measures for both mentees and mentors confirmed that the 13 items reflected a single factor, with factor loadings displayed in Table 2, which also displays the strong internal reliabilities for this scale.

2.4.4. Demographic measures

We collected data on the following demographic variables: age, gender, enrolled course, campus, and pathway to current course, country of birth, first language and other languages spoken, international student status, ethnicity, and length of time in Australia, for those not locally born.

3. Results

3.1. Hypothesis 1: Cross-cultural mentoring would aid the development of intercultural friendships for international students

Table 3 presents mean ratings to the friendship items from time 1 and time 2 for both mentees and controls (those students not mentored) from among the pre-university college students. A repeated measures ANOVA was used to analyze the differences in the number of friends from different ethnic background between mentees and the control group. Before the mentoring took place (time 1), there was a significant difference between the mentees and the control group with respect to their self-reported number of friends from different ethnic backgrounds, $F(1,83) = 6.01, p < .05$. Prior to participating in LAMP, mentees had a higher number of cross-ethnic friends compared to the control group. There was also a significant difference between mentees and the control group after participating in LAMP (time 2) with respect to the number of cross-ethnic friends, $F(1,84) = 7.17, p < .01$, with the mentees having more cross-ethnic friends than the control group. However there were no significant differences in the number of cross-ethnic friends between time 1 and time 2 for either the mentees or the controls.

In contrast, after the completion of LAMP, mentees spent significantly more time with cross-ethnic friends than before LAMP, while no change was seen in the control group $F(1,71) = 5.09, p < 0.05$. The results demonstrate that after completion of the LAMP, mentees spent increasingly more time with cross-ethnic friends although it did not result in an increasing number of friends. Thus, the results are partially consistent with Hypothesis 1.

3.2. Hypothesis 2: Cross-cultural mentoring would increase the involvement of mentees with people from other ethnic groups, after controlling for prior involvement with people from other ethnic groups.

We analyzed the relationship between cross-cultural mentoring and the involvement of mentees with people from other ethnic groups after controlling for prior involvement with cross-ethnic groups using standard multiple regression analysis, the results of which are summarized in Table 4. Together, the cross-cultural mentoring and prior involvement with people from other ethnic groups accounted for 40% of variance in the involvement of mentees with cross-ethnic people at time 2, F statistic. Regression analysis further established that mentoring had a significant effect over and above prior involvement with cross-ethnic groups (time 1). While mentee cross-ethnic friendship at T1 explained 31% of the variance in the involvement of cross-ethnic friendship at T2, $F(1,72) = 32.19, p < .001$, the mentoring independently accounted for an additional 9.5% of the variance in cross-ethnic friendships, $F(1,71) = 11.28, p < .01$. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Qualitative comments by mentees discussing the benefits of LAMP support the idea that increased opportunities for cross-cultural socialization had beneficial effects. In response to questions concerning perceptions of ways that mentees felt they had benefited from LAMP, 55 of 75 mentees completed questionnaires T2. Only five comments were negative. These comments referred either to the lack of genuine interest shown by the mentor, or that the mentor was obliged to interact because LAMP was part of the mentors' course assessment. For example, one mentee commented: "This is not [a] mentoring program to (sic) me—it is just [an] assignment for them".

Sixteen responses referred to the helpfulness of the mentor, with 11 commenting about a new friendship, 11 describing the value of conversing in English, 5 describing a comfortable relationship, and 2 mentioning increased social confidence,

Table 3
Comparing friendship item means for mentees and controls.

Group	Time	Friends from same ethnic group	Friends from different ethnic group	Time spent with same ethnic group	Time spent with different ethnic group
Controls	Time 1	3.70 ^a	2.96 ^a	3.00 ^a	2.21 ^a
	Time 2	3.87 ^a	3.06 ^a	3.13 ^a	2.17 ^a
Mentees	Time 1	3.54 ^a	3.54 ^b	3.18 ^a	2.50 ^b
	Time 2	3.89 ^a	3.44 ^b	3.44 ^a	3.02 ^c

Note: Mean values in the same column that have a different superscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$.

Table 4
Comparing friendship item means for mentees and controls.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β
Time with different ethnic group	.56	.10	.56	.50	.09	.50
Participation in mentoring				-.77	.23	-.31
R^2			.31 ^{***}			.40 ^{***}
$F(1,72)$ for change in R^2						11.28 ^{***}

*** $p < .001$.

Table 5
Matched sample mentor MPQ correlations & mentoring measures.

			Mentor MPQ scales		
			Cultural empathy (CE)	Open-mindedness (O)	Social initiative (SI)
MPQ CE	Mentor T2 self-evaluation: mentoring importance	R	.260	.301*	.174
		N	34	35	33
MPQ O	Mentor T2 self-evaluation: mentoring effectiveness	R	.140	.318*	.190
		N	28	29	27
MPQ SI	Mentee T1: mentoring measure importance scale	R	-.073	.135	.195
		N	46	47	45

Note. * $p < 0.05$, one-tailed.

while 12 respondents discussed cross-cultural interchange. In contrast to the mentees, mentors showed no significant gains in cross-cultural friendships following the mentoring program.

3.3. Hypothesis 3: Each of the cross-cultural aspects of mentor personality, as measured by the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), would positively correlate with cross-cultural mentoring effectiveness and cross-cultural friendship interactions

We explored the relationship between personality and mentoring effectiveness and importance, as rated by both mentees and mentors. Given that we hypothesized positive correlations, one-tailed correlations between MPQ scales and the other measures were computed to assess Hypotheses 3 and 4. Table 5 shows the correlations between the mentor personality and mentoring effectiveness and importance as per Hypothesis 3. Mentor MPQ O showed significant relationships with mentor Self-Evaluations for both Mentoring Importance and Mentoring Effectiveness, as well as mentee-rated Mentoring Importance and Mentoring Effectiveness at time 2. In addition, mentor MPQ ES showed a relationship with mentee-rated Mentoring Importance at time 2.

Table 6 outlines correlations between mentor MPQ scales and mentor Friendship items. MPQ SI showed positive correlations with all four friendship items measured before LAMP, while MPQ O correlated positively with three friendship items, but not with the number of friends from the same ethnic group. In addition, MPQ CE showed a significant positive relationship with friendship items prior to LAMP regarding number of friends of different ethnicity and time spent with different ethnic groups. Only MPQ CE showed positive significant relationships at the conclusion of LAMP with cross-ethnic friendships, specifically number of friends from different ethnic groups, and a non-significant trend for MPQ CE with time spent with different ethnic groups. Conversely, at T2 MPQ O showed a significantly positive relationship with mentors' number of friends from the same ethnic group, while correlations with different ethnic friendships were weaker, but showing a trend approaching but not attaining significance. It is noteworthy that because the sample is reduced by half at T2, the power of this test is reduced when comparing MPQ with the number of friends at T2. Taken together, however, the results reported in Tables 4 and 5 are consistent with Hypothesis 3, showing that mentor personality is related to mentoring effectiveness, importance and friendship variables.

Table 6
Correlations between mentor MPQ and mentor friendship items.

			Mentor MPQ scales		
			Mentor MPQ CE	Mentor O	Mentor SI
T1. Friends same ethnic group	R		.148	.111	.234**
	N		103	105	102
T1. Friends different ethnic group	R		.240**	.288**	.320**
	N		103	105	102
T1. Time spent same ethnic group	R		.067	.204 [†]	.181*
	N		102	104	101
T1. Time spent different ethnic group	R		.255**	.245**	.238**
	N		102	104	101
T2. Friends same ethnic group	R		.150	.378**	.162
	N		51	51	51
T2. Friends different ethnic group	R		.254 [†]	.205	.106
	N		51	51	51
T2. Time spent same ethnic group	R		-.040	.268 [†]	-.079
	N		51	51	51
T2. Time spent different ethnic group	R		.223	.228	.052
	N		50	49	49

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, one-tailed.

Table 7
Correlations between mentee MPQ scores and mentee friendship items.

		Mentee CE	Mentee O	Mentee SI
T1. Friends same ethnic group	R	.250 [†]	.260 [†]	.150
	N	72	69	71
T1. Friends different ethnic group	R	.251 [†]	.347 ^{**}	.338 ^{**}
	N	78	76	77
T1. Time spent same ethnic group	R	.175	.304 ^{**}	.202 [†]
	N	78	76	77
T1. Time spent different ethnic group	R	.235 [†]	.387 ^{**}	.310 ^{**}
	N	78	76	77
T2. Friends same ethnic group	R	.11	.230 [†]	.061
	N	60	60	61
T2. Friends different ethnic group	R	.235 [†]	.244 [†]	.156
	N	60	60	61
T2. Time spent same ethnic group	R	.203	.233 [†]	.182
	N	60	60	61
T2. Time spent different ethnic group	R	.279 [†]	.215	.291 [†]
	N	54	53	54

Note. [†] $p < 0.05$, ^{**} $p < 0.01$, one-tailed.

3.4. Hypothesis 4: Each of the cross-cultural aspects of mentee personality measured by the MPQ would positively correlate with cross-cultural mentoring effectiveness and cross-cultural friendship interactions

The correlations between cross-cultural aspects of mentee personality measures, mentoring effectiveness and friendship variables are shown in Table 7. As described in the introduction, problems with internal reliability meant that only three of the mentee MPQ scales were compared with mentee friendship items. When the mentee correlations between MPQ Scales and Friendship Items were examined (see Table 7), similar patterns to those seen among the mentors were observed, with significant positive correlations between MPQ Scales and most of the Friendship Items at T1. Of note here are the significant positive relationships between MPQ scales and four of the six different ethnic friendship items, with MPQ O also showing a significant positive relationship with the number of same ethnic friends.

These results provide support for Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that mentee personality is also related to mentoring effectiveness, the number of same ethnic and cross-ethnic friendships and time spent with people from the same or another ethnic group.

4. Discussion

The LAMP intervention appeared to produce the desired effect of bridging the cultural divide between local and international students, with time spent in cross-ethnic friendships increasing following LAMP (a dependent variable). This finding is consistent with results following a program of cross-cultural communication skills training (Mak & Buckingham, 2007), however the program also provides a further demonstration that such effects can occur when the intervention is embedded within a university course (Woods et al., 2004). However, while mentees increased cross-cultural contact, LAMP did not establish changes in mentor cross-cultural contact. This is of concern considering the importance of cross-cultural contact for local students (Halualani et al., 2004; Smart et al., 2000; Trice, 2004; Ujitani & Volet, 2008). Perhaps the explanations for this could be related to the differing social and linguistic contexts for the mentee and mentor samples, as well as the operationalization of the concept of cross-cultural friendship, and the short timeframe of the LAMP initiative.

Differences in the social context for mentees and mentors in our sample may provide differential opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. All of the mentees were in Australia for shorter periods, in general, than the student mentors. In contrast, almost half of mentors were international students in a second year course; many of these mentors had at least 18 months experience of being in a diverse ethnic and cultural group.

Language groupings also were a notable difference between the mentee sample and the mentors. At the college from which the mentees were drawn, English was predominantly a second language, with significant groups of Chinese, Japanese and Korean speakers. Several staff working at the pre-university college (predominantly for international students) commented about their students' understandable preference for socializing among their own linguistic and ethnic group, a commonly reported social phenomenon (Nesdale & Todd, 1998; Pitts, 2009). LAMP, despite its brevity, created opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and offered a structured way to enhance mentee's cross-cultural understanding. Mentees in particular, benefited from this process. Future research could specifically examine changes in socio-cultural adjustment (Ward, 1996; Ward & Searle, 1991), in order to determine if LAMP has effects beyond the mentee benefits described here.

Operationalization of the concept of cross-cultural friendships needs careful attention in mentoring programs. Our study tried to focus on cross-cultural peer mentoring rather than ethnically matched peer mentoring, as research on the latter phenomenon is available (Best et al., 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2002). We wanted to encourage interaction between international and domestic students, however we assumed wrongly that each mentoring pair would be cross-cultural. While there is a high degree of overlap between country of birth, ethnicity, and language, as well as international, compared with domestic

student status, these remain distinct aspects of socio-cultural identity. If cross-cultural mentoring is the goal of a mentoring program, then a deliberative process of matching is required. If interaction between domestic and international students is the predominant focus, then assessing friendship by asking about cross-ethnic relationships may only approximate this. Also, more consideration of how to best measure this interaction needs to be given in future research, perhaps by trialing a series of ways of measuring this, including domestic/international student, and cross-linguistic interactions, as well as cross-ethnic interactions.

Mentor MPQ scales, all measured only at time 1 (as personality, by definition, is relatively constant and LAMP was a short duration intervention), showed several significant relationships with time 2 mentoring measures for both mentors and mentees. Higher scores on mentor O consistently were associated with Mentoring Importance and Effectiveness, whether rated by mentors themselves or the mentees independently. Mentees who had open-minded and emotionally stable mentors appeared to regard mentoring as relatively important. Given that independently taken measures show such a relationship in this study, the MPQ shows promise as a predictive instrument for future research in cross-cultural mentoring. This research, therefore, supports [Leong \(2007\)](#), and [Margavio et al. \(2005\)](#) evidence of personality factors influencing successful multicultural interactions. The findings here extend the idea that mentor's personality factors also play a role in successful multicultural interactions.

A number of previous researchers have noted an empirical and theoretical link between personality qualities in mentors and more effective mentoring relationships, in particular the quality of openness to experience ([Niehoff, 2006](#); [Dougherty, Cheung, & Florea, 2008](#)). Yet [Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven \(2000\)](#) stated that the MPQ shows predictive qualities in intercultural situations above that shown by the big 5 personality factors. MPQ O could conceptually be related to openness to experience and LAMP utilized MPQ measures only at time 1 as [Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven \(2000\)](#) argue that MPQ is relatively stable. However, it would be useful in evaluating for a longer cross-cultural intervention, to measure MPQ at both T1 and T2, in order to clarify the effects (if any) of cross-cultural mentoring experience on MPQ.

Relationships between MPQ scales and measures of same and cross-ethnic friendships present a more equivocal picture for both mentors and mentees. For mentors, the number of positive relationships between MPQ scales and same ethnic friendships equates to those with different ethnic friendships when looked at across both time periods. Mentees show a higher number of comparable positive correlations with different ethnic friendships and MPQ scales, albeit with only three sub-scales used. To some extent, the MPQ scales appear to overlap with a general sociability, not peculiarly a cross-ethnic one. In this sample, the only MPQ subscale that appears to discriminate more clearly between same and different ethnic friendships is MPQ CE, although Mentor MPQ SI also show positive cross-ethnic relationships at T2. One explanation for the weaker relationships for mentors could be the halving of sample size at T2 for mentors, supported by trends approaching significance. Perhaps a larger mentor sample at T2 may have given stronger support to LAMP increasing cross-ethnic friendships for mentors also. Given MPQ scales show positive relationships with friendships at the beginning of LAMP, further research utilizing MPQ scales and examining relationships with cross-ethnic interactions, particularly over a longer period is warranted.

The link shown between cross-ethnic friendships and MPQ scales is replicated in a study published by [Williams and Johnson \(2011\)](#) in which MPQ O scores were significantly higher for domestic students with international friends, than for domestic students without such friendships. It could be useful to attempt to tease out whether O, CE, and SI tend to influence cross-ethnic friendship, or whether the reverse is the case, that having more cross-ethnic friendships may result in higher MPQ scores. Similar relationships have been reported by [Leong \(2007\)](#), using a cross-sectional design. If indeed personality characteristics influence cross-cultural friendship, and given the evidence of the importance of cross-cultural friendship for successful adaptation as an international student, then it may be that some personality types are neither suited to participate in cross-ethnic mentoring programs or to study as an international student. Conversely, if cross-ethnic friendships influence MPQ scores, and cross-ethnic mentoring programs help to build the number of cross-ethnic friendships, then programs such as LAMP are very important for successful adaptation for international students. In hoping to build positive relations amongst people of different cultures, we hope that the second suggestion is more salient.

In terms of potential for improving cross-cultural interactions, LAMP has demonstrated this and the shortcomings of too brief a program. An optimal program would minimally span over a whole semester or six sessions as per the Excell program ([Mak & Barker, 2004](#)). Further sessions would provide additional training in cross-cultural communication ([Barker et al., 2002](#); [Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004](#)) and could utilize further intercultural pedagogy ([Pedersen, 2010](#)). This would also provide additional support for mentors, in particular, on how to optimize mentoring across cultures during the mentoring process. It would also be desirable to focus on including social activities in each other's worlds as a structured component of such a program ([Tompson & Tompson 1996](#); [Robertson et al., 2000](#)).

4.1. Limitations

In response to the quantitative items, difficulties in reading and comprehending English as a second language may have interfered with the accuracy of responses to questions. Several of the scales used in this research, particularly the MPQ scales, could be affected by problems with translation, consistent with the result reported in this study when reliability of MPQ scales was generally higher for mentors than mentees, and higher for native English speaking mentors than NESB mentors. [Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee \(2002\)](#) had noted that reliabilities of MPQ scales were lower in their NESB subjects. While

reliabilities of the mentoring Measures were high for both mentors and mentees, responses to qualitative items also showed some potential comprehension and expression problems related to English language competence.

Yeh and Inose (2003) were able to use translations of questionnaires in their research with international students. An optimal research method with second language speakers is to translate questionnaires into the first language of respondents (Brislin, 1986; Cross, 1995), but with a sample with multiple languages as in LAMP, this can prove logistically difficult. Nevertheless, for research in this area to gain greater access to an international student perspective, participants need greater access to questions and discussion in their first language. Methods could include use of bilingual research staff for administering questionnaires and conducting focus groups in students' first language.

A further limitation of this research is that it only assessed the effectiveness of one implementation of LAMP, thereby limiting its generalizability to other settings, but also placing important limits on the types of analyses that were possible. Despite this, the fact that the results were consistent with theoretical predictions and build in a logical fashion on previous research provides some confidence that the conclusions reached here are applicable in other settings. Further research with larger samples would be helpful, but mostly in terms of enabling greater opportunity to provide a more nuanced assessment of the relationship of the observed variables.

5. Conclusion

In summary, LAMP holds useful potential as tool to build cross-cultural friendships for mentees, and for addressing some of the adaptation difficulties faced by international students at universities. It may be an effective bridge to build cross-cultural interactions for mentors if the program lasts longer than three sessions and if future programs give closer attention to operationalizing cross-ethnic mentoring relationships. In particular, a deliberative process of matching is required in order to achieve cross-cultural mentoring in University campuses characterized by a multicultural and internationalized student body originating from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Open-minded mentors appeared to be important in the efficacy of the mentoring program, and we found a positive relationship between mentor O, CE and cross-cultural friendships. We also found a significant, positive relationship between mentee CE and SI with cross-cultural friendship. LAMP is also a fruitful area for research into peer mentoring, cross cultural relationship building and fine-tuning methods of evaluating the mentoring process, the factors influencing optimal peer mentoring and the multiple impacts of an effective peer mentoring approach.

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