**Researcher Biography**

*Name:* Kay Skinner

*Role:* Lecturer in Physiotherapy AFANZAHPE MAPA

*Institutional affiliation:* Charles Sturt University Orange, NSW, Australia

*Explain why you are passionate about health professional education:* I’m passionate about the opportunity we have to change our professions and the way we think about and deliver health services from the ground up, utilising reflective inter-professional engagement and communities of practice.

**Project Summary**

*Title:* Exploring threshold concepts and transformative learning experiences: what are our allied health students telling us about their journey towards cultural competence using participatory action research.

*Names of the research team:* Kay Skinner, Melinda Lewis, Dr Natalia Bilton, Dr Barbara Hill, Mark Matheson, Kerstin McPherson, Dr Simone O’Shea, Dr Caroline Robinson

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*Take home messages:*

It is not clear from the student perspective which threshold concepts, including threshold misconceptions, underpin the development of culturally responsive practice and which learning experiences undergraduate students consider pivotal in their journey towards cultural competence.

Without understanding from the student perspective which threshold concepts underpin this scaffolding, and which learning experiences are pivotal to understanding these concepts, we are unable to clearly, explicitly and efficiently integrate opportunities for learning across undergraduate degrees.

Inappropriate and ineffective delivery of Indigenous Australian content risks student disengagement and/or resistance to engaging with difficult threshold concepts, affecting attainment of the desired learning outcomes or graduate attributes.

**Extended Abstract**

**Background**

Fundamental to achieving sustainable improvements in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is culturally respectful health service delivery, with workforce development and training a key domain identified within the Cultural Respect Framework. Education of allied health (AH) students as culturally responsive practitioners is a critical underpinning of this domain. During the past five years, Indigenous Australian content has been scaffolded through the AH courses in the School of Community Health (SCH) at Charles Sturt University (CSU). What remains unclear, however, is which threshold concepts underpin the development of culturally responsive practice and which learning experiences undergraduate students consider to be transformative in their journey towards cultural competence. Without understanding these aspects from the student perspective we cannot effectively integrate opportunities for learning across undergraduate degrees, risking student resistance to engaging with difficult threshold concepts, and affecting attainment of required graduate attributes.

**Aim**

To explore the following research questions:

* What do students identify as transformative learning experiences in their journey towards cultural competence?
* What do students consider as important concepts in their development of cultural responsiveness (threshold concepts in curriculum)?
* What are the areas of knowledge and practice that students find difficult or troublesome (identifying misconceptions in learning)?
* What types of learning experiences did/would assist engagement and development within the diversity of a cohort?

**Study Design**

This study seeks to adopt a culturally safe Participatory Action Research approach, inclusive of consultation, and acknowledging researcher positionality. The theoretical framework is informed by Transformative Learning for Indigenous Australian cultural competency development.

AH student perspectives about transformational learning experiences will be explored through a series of semi-structured focus groups. Thematic data analysis will utilise the constant comparative method to arrive at a set of interpretive themes. To ensure richness of the pedagogical contexts, teachers in the research team will offer background information and interpretation through their everyday experiences in curriculum.

Outcomes from this study will illuminate key learning experiences for AH students in their journey towards cultural competence. This information will then be used to develop targeted student learning opportunities addressing both identified threshold concepts and misconceptions in learning. By scaffolding these at key points throughout the degree, we can explicitly and efficiently integrate opportunities for learning across the undergraduate degrees.

Dissemination of the study findings will be through conference presentations and one or more peer reviewed publications, contributing to practice knowledge about threshold concepts and transformative learning experience. The proposed study has clear links with ANZAHPE’s strategic priorities: Support research and scholarship in health professions education; and provide strategic leadership around key issues in health professions education, specifically the education of AH students as culturally responsive practitioners.