

30.3.2026

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**Title**

Overcoming cross-cultural group work tensions : mixed student perspectives on the role of social relationships / Jenna Mittelmeier ...

**Publication year**

2018

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education. - 75 (2018) 1, S. 149 - 166

**Inventory number**

46648

**Keywords**

Studentenschaft : Studienverhalten ; Studentenschaft : soziale Lage

**Abstract**

As universities worldwide rapidly internationalise, higher education classrooms have become unique spaces for collaboration between students from different countries. One common way to encourage collaboration between diverse peers is through group work. However, previous research has highlighted that cross-cultural group work can be challenging and has hinted at potential social tensions. To understand this notion better, we have used robust quantitative tools in this study to select 20 participants from a larger classroom of 860 students to take part in an in-depth qualitative interview about cross-cultural group work experiences. Participant views on social tensions in cross-cultural group work were elicited using a unique mediating artefact method to encourage reflection and in-depth discussion. In our analysis of emergent interview themes, we compared student perspectives on the role of social relationships in group work by their academic performance level. Our findings indicated that all students interviewed desired the opportunity to form social relationships with their group work members, but their motivations for doing so varied widely by

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