HLTHIR403C
Work effectively with culturally diverse clients and co-workers

Contents

Chapter [Module] One

Cultural Diversity

Understanding others makes possible a better knowledge of oneself: any form of identity is complex, for individuals are defined in relation to other people – both individually and collectively – and the various groups to which they owe allegiance, in a constantly shifting pattern. (UNESCO (1996) Learning: The treasure within. Retrieved from Anti-racism education website)   http://www.racismnoway.com.au

Australia is a multi-cultural society representing many people from different cultural backgrounds. This has contributed to the richness of Australian society and has come about through immigration in the years since settlement in 1788. Prior to this time, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were the dominant cultures in Australia.

An appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for people's backgrounds is essential for those working within Australia's community services sector.

History of Australian Migration

For the past 200 years immigration has played a central role in Australia's population growth and economic development.

Timeline of migration

1700 Indigenous population estimated at 300,000–750,000.	1788 From 1788–1868 160,000 convicts were shipped to the Australian colonies from the United Kingdom. From the early 1790s free immigrants also began coming to Australia.	1851 During the Gold Rush era of 1851–1860, around 500,000 people migrated to Australia. The main migrant communities were from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, China and the USA.	1860 From 1860–1900, labourers from Melanesia (Pacific Islands) were forcibly recruited to work on Queensland sugar plantations.	1870 From 1850–1900 Afghani, Pakistani and Turkish camel handlers played an important part in opening up central Australia, and in helping build the telegraph and railway lines.
1880 In the late 1800s Japanese fishers were important in the pearling industry.	1901 With Federation, immigration restriction *began* with the *Chinese Immigration Act* in 1855 in Victoria, restricting entry of Chinese people into the Colony, the first law of this kind in Australia. This legislation made it difficult	1950 After World War II, during the 1950 and 1960s, large numbers of migrants came to Australia from the Netherlands, Greece, Italy, Malta, Germany and Turkey. This was part of the "Populate or	1956 In 1956, Hungarian refugees fled fighting in their country.	1968 In 1968, Czech refugees fled fighting in their country.

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	for non-English speaking immigrants to come to Australia. This was the beginning of the White Australia Policy that existed until 1973.	Perish" migration policy.		
1973 In 1973, refugees came to Australia from Chile following the overthrow of the elected government.	**1975** From 1975–1985, over 90,000 refugees came to Australia form Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) after the end of the Vietnam War.	**1976** From 1976–1981, approximately 16,000 Lebanese refugees fled civil war.	**2000** From 2000, Australia has taken in people from a broad range of countries including Iraq, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sudan, India and Sri Lanka.	

(Adapted from World Vision Australia, 2012)

Further Information

More information on migration to Australia can be found in this document from the Parliamentary Library.
http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/bn/sp/migrationpopulation.pdf

Immigration guidelines

The following table depicts the Australian Government's guidelines for immigration. Each year Australia takes in an assigned number of migrants and refugees, which is based on skill shortages and qualifications. Immigrants who meet Australia's skill shortage needs to receive priority for entry.

Refugees enter Australia under the *Refugee and Humanitarian Program* based on their eligibility for resettlement. These people are identified offshore, often living in refugee camps in other parts of the world, and are referred to the Australian Government by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The number of refugees granted entry is small when compared with skilled migrants.

Non–Humanitarian Migration	Humanitarian migration program
Skilled migration • Migrants possess a skill that Australia requires • Based on a system of points, which includes language, education and health status • May require an Australian sponsor	**Refugees** • People fleeing persecution in their country of origin
Family migration • Also based on a system • Families are not automatically allowed to reunite	**Special humanitarian program** • Not refugees but have suffered human rights violations in their country of origin

Further Information

Explore these links from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection website for more information on living in Australia.

- **Visas:**
  http://www.immi.gov.au/migrants/

- **Refugee Eligibility Requirements:**
  http://www.immi.gov.au/visas/humanitarian/offshore/eligibility.htm

- **Refugee and Humanitarian Fact Sheet:**
  http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm

Census 2011 Population Statistics

Australia's Population by Country of Birth

The cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia's resident population has been reshaped over many years by migration. Historically, more people immigrate to, than emigrate from, Australia.

By 30 June 2013, 27.7 percent of the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) was born overseas (6.4 million people). This was an increase from the prior year, when 27.3 percent of the ERP was born overseas (6.2 million people). In 2003 - ten years earlier - 23.6 percent of the ERP were born overseas (4.7 million people).

1.1 Australia's population born overseas

(a) Census years only until 1981. Post 1981 based on estimated resident population at 30 June.
(b) Estimates for 1992-2006 have been recast and estimates from June quarter 2012 onwards are preliminary.

Persons born in the UK continued to be the largest group of overseas-born residents, accounting for 5.3 percent of Australia's total population as of 30 June 2013. This was followed by persons born in New Zealand (2.6 percent), China (1.8 percent), India (1.6 percent) and Vietnam (0.9 percent).

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Country of Birth: Proportion of Australia's population
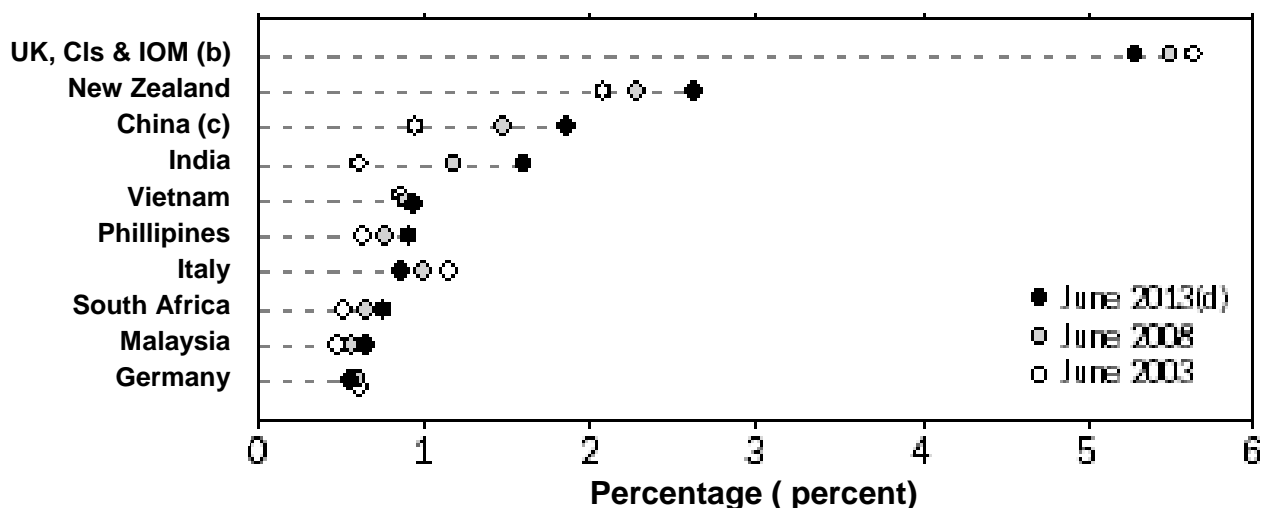
(a) Based on the top 10 countries of birth (excluding Australia) at 30 June 2013
(b) United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man
(c) Excludes SAPs and Taiwan
(d) Estimates for 1992-2011 are recast and estimates from June quarter 2012 onwards are preliminary.

Over the last 10 years, the proportion of the Australian population who were born in the United Kingdom decreased from 5.7 percent in 2003 to 5.3 percent in 2013. Conversely, the proportions increased for people born in New Zealand (from 2.1 to 2.6 percent), China (from 1.0 to 1.8 percent) and India (from 0.6 to 1.6 percent).

In terms of Australia's population growth, for the top 50 countries of birth (excluding Australia) at 30 June 2013, persons born in Nepal had the highest rate of increase between 2003 and 2013 with an average annual growth rate of 26.3 percent. However, this growth began from a small base of 3,000 persons at 30 June 2003.

The second fastest increase over this period was in the number of persons born in India (12.0 percent per year on average), followed by those born in Pakistan (11.4 percent), Bangladesh (10.9 percent) and Sudan (9.2 percent). Of the top 50 countries of birth, the number of persons born in Serbia had the largest decrease, 3.1 percent, followed by Hungary with an annual decrease of 1.3 percent.
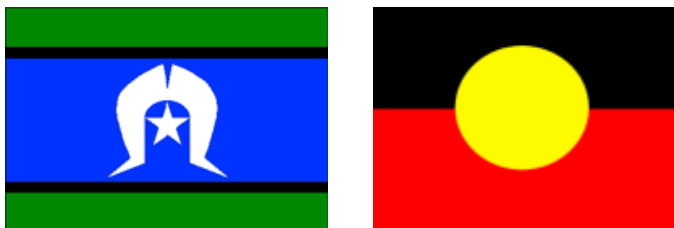
Further information

Further information about Australia's Population by Country of Birth can be found here.

http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3412.0~2011-12+and+2012-13~Chapter~Australia's+Population+by+Country+of+Birth?OpenDocument#2314182119149957

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population

Key Features of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population distribution and structure

In the 2011 Census:

- 548,400 people were identified and counted as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, an increase of 21 percent from the 2006 Census representing 2.5 percent of the census count.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 2.5 percent of the 2011 Census count, up from 2.3 percent in 2006.
- The median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was 21 years, compared with 20 years in 2006.

New South Wales had the highest count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (172,600 or 32 percent of the national total), followed by Queensland (155,800 or 28 percent of the national total) and Western Australia (69,700 or 13 percent of the national total). Combined, these three states made up almost three-quarters (73 percent) of people who were identified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of state population counted as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin (27 percent), while Victoria had the lowest proportion of state population at less than 1 percent of the state total.

Further information

 More information regarding Australia's population distribution can be found here. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2076.0main+features1102011

Projected population statistics can be found here. http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/1647509ef7e25faaca2568a900154b63!OpenDocument

International Treaties and Conventions

Australia is a sovereign nation and has agreed to participate in the international system of law. This involves a commitment to treaties with other sovereign states, acknowledging the

necessity of upholding particular rights and responsibilities in order to maintain its seat within the Commonwealth of Nations.

Australia has voluntarily committed to respecting international human rights treaties under domestic law, however this does not necessarily mean that treaty obligations are incorporated into Australian law in their entirety. Legislation may be developed based on the principles of international conventions with little direct reference to them. For example the government has previously formulated divergent policy responses that it believes are still compliant with international law obligations.

There are a number of examples where policy decisions have been challenged due to questions of potential human rights violations, however where legislation is deemed to be ambiguous, issues are primarily addressed in accordance with Australia's international treaty obligations.

Further Information

 More information on International Law can be found here.
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/comp101.htm

Case Study: Asylum Seekers

To find examples of legal challenges on potential human rights violations, one need look no further than in the case of asylum seekers. Refugee advocates have challenged Federal Government decisions based on what they consider to be violations of international law in the High Court of Australia. Read more here. http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/34996/

Case Study from Amnesty International:

"High hopes for full High Court hearing on asylum seeker boat"

High Court of Australia deliberations have put the transfer of asylum seekers to Sri Lanka's Navy in doubt, a plan that if enacted, would put Australia in blatant breach of international law and set a dangerous precedent.

153 missing asylum seekers

The news follows an application that was brought on behalf of 153 Sri Lankan asylum seekers recently intercepted by the Australian Navy on their way from India.
"The decision that the whole High Court will hear the challenge reflects the gravity of the Australian government's deeply concerning proposal to return asylum seekers to a country where their lives may be at serious risk," said Amnesty International Australia's Refugee Spokesperson Graeme McGregor."

Click here for information on this case.
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/n/mr/140729_Curtin157.pdf

Commission on Human Rights

After the Second World War there was international recognition of the need for world nations and their people to collaboratively solve their problems and to observe and acknowledge human rights. This led to the establishment of the United Nations in 1945.

One outcome of the formation of the United Nations was the development of a Commission on Human Rights, which in turn formulated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR outlines the international standard of people's rights regardless of gender, religion, race, language, abilities, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation, recognising that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". (http://www.universalrights.net/main/creation.htm).

While the UDHR did not gain full recognition from some communist and Middle Eastern countries at the time of its endorsement, they did not vote against it. The UDHR has become accepted as a significant set of standards, even by countries that are resistant to the human rights struggle. The UDHR is now practically an extension of the U.N. Charter, and an important part of international customary law.

Treaties that Australia has signed include:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- Convention on the Political Rights of Women
- International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
- Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
- Slavery Convention of 1926
- Supplementary Convention on Slavery
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The rights of children have not always been included in the Declaration of Human Rights, as they had not previously been considered as separate from their parents. Early conceptualisation of children's rights focused on their need for protection. However, over the past century, global interest in the rights of children has increased - parallel to the concept of human rights. The U.N. has therefore established an international community, setting optimal standards for the treatment of children.

One of the most significant steps taken towards establishing an international standard of children's rights was the *Declaration of Geneva*. This was proclaimed in 1924 by the "Save the Children Fund International Union", announcing five basic principles of child protection and welfare. These principles were further expanded upon in 1948. Thus, when the UDHR was adopted in 1948, children's rights were an integral part of this declaration.

While the Declaration on the Rights of The Child was unanimously agreed upon in November 1959, it went through a series of redrafting and reviews and it was not until after extensive consultation with non-government organisations that it was finally adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in November 1989 and became part of international law in 1990. http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cbc.html

Australian Legislation

Australia is a highly diverse society. Historically, Australian immigration policies were neither inclusive nor accepting of cultural diversity. The "White Australia policy" is a term that commonly refers to the Federal, State and Territory immigration policies that excluded non-white people from immigrating to Australia from the late 1880s through to the 1970s. While still relevant after World War II, the White Australia policy was applied less vigorously and more selectively. Entry was eventually opened up to migrants for the benefit of the Australian economy.

The White Australia Policy was eventually dismantled in 1973 during the Whitlam period, however it had taken 25 years for this shift to occur.

The steps taken by the Whitlam Labor government to remove race as a factor in Australia's immigration policies had a profound effect and included:

- Legislation that all migrants, of whatever origin, be eligible to obtain citizenship after three years of permanent residence
- Issuing policy instructions to overseas posts to totally disregard race as a factor in the selection of migrants
- Ratification of all international agreements relating to immigration and race

(Source: National Communications Branch, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Canberra 2009, *Fact Sheet 8 – Abolition of the 'White Australia' Policy)*

Relevance of Immigration History and Legislation in Practice

The historical changes, referred to above, provide the context and framework for working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups in the community services sector. Community service workers need to deliver culturally-appropriate and culturally-sensitive services to clients, and be mindful of respectful working relationships in their interactions with colleagues who may be from different cultural backgrounds. Every worker and client, has the right to be treated fairly irrespective of their sex, race, any disability, marital status, pregnancy, family status or family responsibility, their religious or political beliefs, any spent convictions (e.g., a conviction no longer taken into account for legal purposes after a period of time has elapsed), sexual orientation or gender history. In Australia this reflects the principle of everybody being given what is commonly referred to as a "fair go".

The *Equal Opportunity Act 1987* gives everyone a "fair go" by law. This law makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on certain grounds and areas of public life.

Commonwealth Laws
Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
Sex Discrimination Act 1984
Age Discrimination Act 2004
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986

These laws were introduced specifically to protect the following groups that were identified as being most at risk:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- People who have migrated to Australia and whose first language is a language other than English, and the children of those people
- People with a disability
- Women

Bias, Discrimination and Racism

What is discrimination?

Discrimination has been defined as "treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit". It can considered as either positive behaviour or negative behaviour directed towards a certain group.

Positive discrimination is where extra benefits are provided to people because of their specific group membership. Negative discrimination that is directed toward a certain group might restrict or deny basic human rights, social participation, or privileges and opportunities that are available to other groups.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is the national body set up to address inequalities and discrimination in Australian society. Anyone who is subject to discrimination based on sex, gender identity, intersex status, sexual orientation, disability, race and age can lodge a complaint with the Commission. The Commission also hears complaints to do with discrimination and bullying and harassment in the workplace within certain criteria (Australian Human Rights Commission).

What is racism?

Racism has been defined as "the prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races" or "discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards members of another race".

Eliminating bias and discrimination in the community services sector

Every person in the workplace needs to work to eliminate any bias or discrimination against any group or individual. By learning more about your clients and co-workers you can often overcome issues that might arise through personal biases. Some discriminatory behaviour in the workplace can include:

- Racist jokes or cartoons
- Not giving people information in a format that they understand
- Segregation or non-inclusive practices
- Stereotyping

Further Information

Explore the following websites

- Racism. No Way   www.racismnoway.com.au

- The Sydney Morning Herald. Racism on the rise in Australia: Migrants report cultural shift http://www.smh.com.au/national/racism-on-the-rise-in-australia-migrants-report-cultural-shift-20140405-365a5.html

Defining Culture

"We can see the diversity of human cultures behind us, around us, and before us. The only demand that we can justly make is that all the forms this diversity may take ... contributes to the fullness of all the others."   - Claude Levi-Strauss

Culture is something that is learned and leads to the differences between groups of people. Such differences are not bred. They are learned by each member and transmitted to the next generation. Culture is the total of everything we do as a member of a particular society…. "it is the way things are done around here" and the common rules and patterns of behaviour of one culture may be very different from those of another (Edgar Earle and Fopp,1993).

Consider the following definitions of "culture" that refer to patterns of behaviour and beliefs.

"Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of Society". http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/cultural-diversity/

"The complete way of life of a people: The shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterise a group; their customs, art, literature, religion, philosophy, etc.; the pattern of learned and shared behaviour among the members of a group". http://www.digonsite.com/glossary/ag.html

"The learned values, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours of specific groups of people". http://www.gainsctr.com/curriculum/juvenile/glossary.htm - link not working so not embedded

"Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts". http://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html

From these definitions, one can conclude that culture is a learned way of life that is shared by a group. The group may come together because of their ethnic origins, professional status, religious convictions, gender, the area in which they live, or a shared interest. However, it is important to remember that even though a person looks different, or even identifies with a different culture, they are still an individual. Their values, beliefs and practices may be the same as our own, or completely different. It is up to us to establish these similarities or differences and acknowledge these in the way we provide community services to our clients.

Workers need to be aware of the fact that a person's background and beliefs influence the way they live their lives.

Examples include:

- The way we communicate with each other
- What we believe is polite behaviour
- Cultural or personal rituals that are followed
- Roles of individuals in society
- Greeting someone for the first time

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- The gender and familial roles undertaken by family members, for example, who does the cooking
- How we ask to speak to someone on the telephone
- Whether and how we prayed today
- What we think about men and women
- How we apologise
- What sort of events we will attend
- How we relate to other workers who are younger or older
- The way we express emotions like anger, happiness
- What we think will happen when we die
- The importance of family to us
- What control we believe we have over our own health and life

Human Behaviour and Values

When we choose to work in a service industry, it is helpful to acquire some knowledge and understanding of human development and behaviour. This will help us to understand the behaviour of others and provides a theoretical framework from which to practice. Having a theoretical framework to refer to broadens our perspective and communicates the complexity of the human condition. This can assist us to be objective in our view of others and our understanding of individuals and the different cultural groups we may encounter in the course of our work.

As discussed above, culture is acquired; we learn culture from our parents and others in our community and it is shared with others in our society. It defines our core values, what we consider to be important and resists rapid change. Culture shapes our values.

What are "values"

Examples of values such as privacy, honesty, family and wealth are shaped by the beliefs and attitudes we have about:

- How things should be in the world
- How people should act in the world
- How the important aspects of your life are handled, e.g., money, family, relationships, power, male and female roles

Workers' ideas and attitudes towards social issues, such as the right of same sex couples to marry or adopt children and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to free education are all influenced by the values they have grown up with. They will in turn influence peoples' work practices and attitudes towards others.

We develop our values over our lifetime and community services workers need to have an awareness of how they can influence our thoughts and actions. Clients will also have a set of values, ideas and beliefs. It is not possible to change these values, nor is it right to expect the client to change. What is important is to develop the ability to work with respect and acceptance of the uniqueness of each individual, with a recognition of difference.

As community services workers we need to consider our ideas and beliefs regarding people from other cultures. We may have developed set attitudes about the behaviours and rights of other people from other countries, and when we work in the service industry, our ideas, beliefs and values may be challenged.

It is important to:

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- Identify our values
- Identify our client's values
- Understand how we developed our own beliefs and cultural expectations
- Learn about our client's beliefs and cultural backgrounds
- Learn about client's beliefs and cultural background and *put aside any personal biases.*

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is founded on acceptance, respect, understanding and appreciation of different cultures in the community. The evolution of multiculturalism has successfully placed the needs of people from diverse backgrounds onto the political and social agenda. Government has recognised and responded to the changing nature of the nation's social environment by implementing policies which reflect its commitment to ensuring that multicultural policy is based on participation and inclusion and that such policies refer to, and seek to benefit, all Australians.

Further Information

Further information on multiculturalism policy can be found here.

http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1011/11rp06

Cultural Diversity

The concept of cultural diversity highlights the complex nature of today's society and encompasses the importance of acceptance and respect, recognising individual differences and understanding that each individual is unique.

This can relate to, but is not limited to:

- Ethnicity
- Race
- Language
- Cultural norms and values
- Dress
- Values
- Religion and religious practices
- Beliefs and customs
- Kinship and family structure and relationships
- Personal history and experience, which may have been traumatic
- Gender and gender relationships
- Age
- Socio-economic status
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Special needs
- Political views
- Social and community responsibilities

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- Family and family responsibilities.

Diversity also encompasses the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Ethnic Groups

Ethnic groups are people who recognise a shared history and whose members identify with each other. Ethnic identity is further marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness and the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioural or biological traits.

For example, China is home to 56 official ethnic groups. The largest group, the Han, make up over 92 percent of China's population. It is elements of the Han that the western world considers "Chinese culture". Yet the 55 ethnic minorities, located on China's vast frontiers, maintain their own rich traditions and customs, and all are part of Chinese culture.

Physical contact

In some cultures it is common practice to kiss or hug someone on greeting them. For others this form of contact is reserved for close personal relationships. In some cultures it is considered impolite to even touch someone. The amount of physical contact may be partially determined by the culture they grew up in. However, all people are individuals with their own experiences, so that also needs to be considered.

Community workers should not presume that what they prefer or what they believe a client's cultural background indicates is the correct way to approach someone physically. Always check with the person and be aware of signs of discomfort.

Death and dying

Every culture has its own way of coping with death, dying and mourning. The Aboriginal people of central Australia commence "Sorry Business" with wailing and traditional mourners cut themselves to demonstrate their sorrow at the person's passing. "Sorry Business" is a communal ceremony for those of the family and kin, and all are obligated to attend. Customs include cleansing of places where the dead person resided or commonly visited, not mentioning the person's name and two burial ceremonies, the second to encourage the deceased's spirit to move on and not cause the family mischief.

Other cultures have their own traditions relating to autopsies, burial preparationstyles and mourning rituals. Community workers should familiarise themselves with the cultural requirements around death and dying of their clients so that they can ensure they are treated with sensitivity and demonstrate respect if such a situation occurs.

Clothing and personal belonging

Clothing can be an important expression of culture. Community workers should be aware of the clothes they wear and their appearance, to ensure they are non-offensive. Clients may

choose to wear clothes from their cultural background or wish to conform to the rules of their culture or religion.

For example, Islamic men and women will substantially cover their bodies as required under their law. Islamic women may also cover their hair with a veil called a hijab. Islam pays much attention to the protection of women and caring for women's specific needs. Special consideration is said to honour her and make her position secure in life.

The community worker needs to be sensitive to a client's requirements, assisting them where necessary and refraining from any negative comments.

Food and culture

Many cultures have specific rules or practices around food that a community worker needs to be aware of. Some common practices you may encounter are:

- Jewish person who only eats kosher foods (those prescribed by Jewish law as clean)
- Vegetarian and vegan diets, where the person refrains from eating meat, and in the case of vegan diets any meat-related product, such as eggs and cheese
- The use of chopsticks and preference for rice as a staple by Asian clients
- Eating with the right hand only for someone from an Indian or Islamic background, the left hand is considered unclean
- Avoiding alcohol in a number of religions

As organisations encounter cultural changes in their client or staff profile, they need to adjust the way they do things. Staff needs to maintain current knowledge on client needs and adapt the way they operate to meet those needs. Organisations might also consider "the bigger picture", e.g., do they need to employ staff from a particular culture to reflect the changing demographics of the local geographical area the service operates within? Do they have the correct gender mix in their workforce? Other changes might be:

- Developing written materials in a number of languages
- Printing signs in a different language or changing to symbolic signage
- Accessing interpreter services
- Changing rosters to meet staff cultural requirements
- Changing service delivery times
- Initiating cultural awareness training

Community workers need to adapt the way they do things to meet the needs of clients or co-workers and sometimes this means learning and adopting new practices. Community services workers need to familiarise themselves with their own community and the client groups for which they will be providing services. This will assist to accommodate the needs of their clients more appropriately as they will have knowledge and an understanding of the characteristics, preferences and cultural traditions relevant to their client group. Whenever considering changes to a service it is best practice to undertake consultation.

Workers can consult with the community by:

- Approaching cultural advisers or community leaders and Elders

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- Approaching other community agencies who work with the community as well as local government. Local governments have Social Plans which outline the demographic profile of the community and have a responsibility to plan services appropriately.
- Client groups

Workers also need to ensure they comply with legislation while at the same accommodating different cultural needs and being culturally sensitive in how this is achieved.

Resources for CALD

Helpful resources and assistance available to support clients and their families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are as follows:

- Social Policy Research Centre: Literary Review discussing culturally appropriate service provision for CALD families
http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/research_cald_families.pdf

- Ethnic Community Council: New South Wales Multicultural Resource Guide

   http://www.eccfcsc.org/bspresources/NSW_percent20Multicultural percent20Resource percent20Guide.pdf

- Shine for Kids NSW: Directory of Support Services for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People in NSW
http://www.shineforkids.org.au/documents/directories/Directory percent20Support percent20Services percent20CALD percent20- percent20NSW percent20- percent20July percent202009.pdf

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is knowledge of the cultural and social groups which are represented within one's community, and a familiarity with the important issues that may affect their circumstances. This knowledge is needed in order to deliver services and support in a way that is sensitive to the beliefs, practices and traditions of these groups.

Cultural awareness provides a foundation for communication. It recognises that we are all shaped by our cultural background, which influences how we interpret the world around us. It also influences how we perceive ourselves and relate to other people. Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to communicate with people from different cultures. It is not a requirement to be an expert in another's culture or have all the answers. But cultural awareness helps us to explore cultural issues with clients and respond with more sensitivity. *Misunderstandings can occur without some level of cultural awareness as without that awareness we resort to using our own meanings to make sense of another's reality.*

Becoming aware of specific cultural practices and customs will help to increase our cultural knowledge, however it is always important to identify individual needs and preferences and remember that no individual can be reduced to a set of cultural norms.

Within any culture, people's values, behaviour and beliefs can vary enormously.

Key considerations in cultural awareness:

- Be aware of one's own cultural influences

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- Be aware of judging other people's behaviour and beliefs according to the standards of our own culture
- Be aware of making assumptions about cultural influences and applying generalisations to individuals
- Understand that the behaviour and beliefs of people within each culture can vary considerably
- Understand that the extent to which people adopt practices of the dominant culture and retain those of their culture can vary between individuals, families, and community groups
- Understand that not all people identify with their cultural and religious background
- Understand that culture itself is a fluid entity
- Understand the importance of familiarising oneself with different cultural practices and issues
- Understand the importance of communicating with sensitivity

Most of us experience some feeling of discomfort or confusion when we are faced with behaviour we do not understand, especially if that behaviour does not follow the rules of our own culture. We tend to automatically believe that our way is the right way – and this is when misunderstandings and conflict can occur. This is especially true when someone else's behaviour offends our own values. What seems automatic and correct to us could be quite alien to a person from a different culture. The really important point to remember is that we do not all define ourselves in the same way.

Cultural Competence

While cultural awareness is vital for community services workers, in recent years it has been criticised for failing to take into account that knowledge and awareness does not necessarily translate into behaviour and practices. Cultural awareness can be thought of as a first step - but knowledge and behaviour need to be put into practice and demonstrated within service systems in a policy and practice context.

The Centre for Cultural Competence - Australia (2014)

"Cultural Competence" has been defined as a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

It is also the process in which the professional continually strives to achieve ability and availability to effectively work within the cultural context of the client.

Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes.

Cultural competence also emphasises a worker's ability to:

- Identify the ways in which one's own culture has influenced one's attitudes, behaviours and beliefs, and to challenge these cultural assumptions

- Value diversity and to learn about other cultures
- Be willing to look at the world from another cultural perspective without judgment
- Acquire knowledge of the language, beliefs and customs of specific cultures
- Challenge limiting stereotypes and communicate comfortably and effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds

The Term "Normal"

Community workers should avoid/minimise using the term 'normal', as it is a value-laden concept with connotations of exclusion. Use of the term may lead to clients feeling inadequate as it fails to acknowledge the diversity of people and the importance of their life experiences. It also implies comparison to others and norms that the client may not fit into. This could cause further alienation and isolation and affect the client's sense of self-worth, participation and acceptance in the broader community. These socially constructed ideas may be not appropriate and/or not relevant to a client's background or situation.

Strategies that can be helpful in avoiding or minimising discrimination or bias in the workplace include:

- Inclusive policies around decision-making
- Cross-cultural training
- Cross-cultural employee representation on committees
- Cross-cultural work teams
- Work places free of culturally insensitive literature, posters, signage or cartoons
- Use of interpreters and/or cultural brokers.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture

Over the next few pages, you will explore aspects of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

The Federal Government describes an Aboriginal person as someone who:

- Is of Aboriginal descent
- Identifies themselves as an Aboriginal person
- Is accepted as such by the Aboriginal community in which he or she lives

Australia is a large continent and it is estimated that at the time the British arrived in 1788 there were close to 700 different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander "nations" - with 250 different languages, social structures and cultures.

It is perhaps useful to think of Aboriginal Australia as similar to Europe with just as many different countries, types of dress, food and cultures. While concentrating on the basic beliefs and philosophies, which span different nations, it is important not to fall into the trap of thinking all Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the same. There are significant differences in social, cultural and linguistic customs between the various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. Since 1972, conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have improved, yet these recent developments to address social disadvantage still fall short and further improvement is needed.

There are a number of contemporary issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In particular, the serious violation of human rights surrounding *The Stolen Generation*; which refers to the estimated 50,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families in the years between 1910 and 1970 by Australian Federal

and State Government agencies and church missions. The intent of these removals was to eradicate indigenous culture by raising children away from their own people. This issue is still painfully significant for many indigenous families and it is important not to underestimate the impact this period had on indigenous culture and family life. It was only in 2009 that the Australian government made a public apology and acknowledgement of this mistreatment. Issues such as these understandably conjure up strong emotions within the community at large, and these, by their nature, need addressing with greater awareness and sensitivity so that all issues are dealt with fairly and with equal representation.

Further Information

- An Indigenous map can be found here. http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/

- More information on Aboriginal history can be found here.

- Hear a short story about Aboriginal history - from the Dreamtime to the arrival of the British to present day. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGLL7M1CqfY

ATSI Health Activities

Information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health activities can be found here. http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+Health-1lp

How ATSIs Access Services

This document provides insight about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders access services. http://www.naclc.org.au/resources/YARNINUP_NATIONAL_WEB.pdf

Cultural Brokers and Elders

The issues surrounding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are extremely complex and require workers to be genuinely engaged with the person to ensure that the person's culture is validated and that the service provides culturally appropriate support. Engaging the help of Cultural Brokers or Elders may assist in bridging the gap between cultures to ensure service delivery is provided with the utmost respect and consideration of culturally appropriate practices.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still have cultural and spiritual obligations. For example, funeral obligations may last from one day to three weeks, depending on the personal obligation to the person who has died. In most communities, the traditional obligations to care for the land and particular sacred sites remain an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life.

Gender is another issue which may affect relationships between Aboriginal and Torres

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Strait Islander people and people from other cultures. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still have *"women's business"* and "men's business", from which the opposite sex is excluded. This can be particularly relevant when discussing specific issues of a sensitive nature.

Cultural brokers

The role of a Cultural Broker is to facilitate communication and act as the go between to link or mediate between different cultural groups (Jezewski, in Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001). A cultural broker can be crucial in the early stages of engagement and can be either a respected person from the specific cultural, group concerned, e.g., elder, or a professional who has a thorough understanding of the cultural practices, values, beliefs and world view of both groups.

Further Information

Information about best practices for communicating effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can be found here.
http://www.health.qld.gov.au/deadly_ears/docs/hp-res-comeffect.pdf

Explore the conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-ip5.pdf

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety is a relatively new term coined by a Maori student nurse in the late 1980s. Irihapeti Ramsden (Eckermann, 2009) queried hospital policy on standard nursing practices by saying "You people talk about legal safety, ethical safety and safety in clinical practices and a safe knowledge base, but what of cultural safety?"

Cultural safety has been defined as:

"An environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening." (Williams 1999, Australian Human Rights Commission 2011)

It moves beyond cultural awareness and sensitivity, and gives people the power to comment on the services they receive and be involved in changes to the services offered, including where their experience has been negative. Applying cultural safety highlights current practice in the delivery of culturally responsive and appropriate services, recognising the importance of client input and feedback and provides evidence for evaluation and continuous improvement.

Insights

Find out what others have to say: Enhancing Cultural Safety in Services for Children, Families and the Community
https://fightdementia.org.au/sites/default/files/20090901-NATSIDAG-FacilitatorsGuide_Sec-7_Cultural_Safety.pdf

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Cultural Safety for ATSIs

[This video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2es-wp-pRTU) highlights the importance of enabling cultural safety for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders community.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2es-wp-pRTU

Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7azfQQOCi2M

Importance of Cultural Expertise in Health Teams
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQKQOf5pra0

Cultural Practice Continuum

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/TOOLKIT_-_FINAL_FINAL.pdf

Respecting Diversity in the Workplace

All communication and interactions with clients and colleagues should demonstrate a respect for cultural diversity. This means accepting that while we may not fully understand another's point of view or why they act in certain ways because of their cultural background, we respect their right to that view or action so long as it does not harm another.

Community workers are expected to work in a manner that demonstrates respect for other people's cultural beliefs and not create barriers for those who may be of a different culture than their own. By allowing clients and co-workers the opportunity to express their cultural preferences, we are promoting a work environment that is psychologically and culturally safe where people are not abused or put down because of their cultural practices or expression.

Working with persons of diverse gender, sexuality and age

A person's gender is defined as "male" or "female". In Australia we promote equality of the sexes however this may not hold true for all cultures and can impact the way one is treated as a community worker. Gender is in many ways a social construct where stereotypical gender norms and roles dictate how a male or a female should behave. This may vary from culture to culture, and also between individuals.

Sex and/or Gender Diverse (SGD) is a term used in Australia to refer to persons who identify as a gender apart from the limited biological and socially defined concepts of male and female, man and woman. It is a term that reveres the diversity in sex and gender identities, and acknowledges that gender and sexuality exist on a continuum rather than two definitive categories of male and female. SGD includes a broad range of groups such as transsexual, transgender, androgynous, asexual, and intersex. This highlights the fact that cultural diversity does not just refer to ethnicity or race but to all people who express different characteristics.

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Sex and gender diversity

 You can read more on these issues [here](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/stories/new-guidelines-recognise-sex-and-gender-diversity).
https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/stories/new-guidelines-recognise-sex-and-gender-diversity

Summary

Community service workers may decide to specialise in one particular area in their work and over time they may move throughout the sector in different roles. The spectrum of client groups is diverse and ranges from working with families and children, youth, people living with a disability, the aged, or specific cultural groups. In all sectors, you will encounter clients from diverse backgrounds and will need to acquire the knowledge and skills to work effectively within this context.

Working Relationships

Community services workers need positive worker/client relationships if they are to work effectively together. Courteous, polite behaviour among peers and between workers and clients will help to prevent many problems in the workplace as it demonstrates genuine respect for the beliefs of others which is necessary for effective communication. Although there will always be differences between people, identifying areas of mutual interest will help to foster positive working relationships.

Positive respectful behaviour includes:

- Arriving at work on time
- Working cooperatively
- Taking responsibility for managing own performance
- Showing consideration, e.g., thinking of the needs of others
- Being polite, e.g., using preferred title, using appropriate tone of voice, listening to the way others address each other
- Giving recognition to customs and beliefs where appropriate, e.g., removing shoes before entering a home
- Showing genuine interest, e.g., worker asks client about issues that are relevant and important to the client
- Respecting a worker or client's right to privacy and confidentiality

Encountering Problems

Community workers need to refer to their supervisor if there are any problems arising from the client's customs and spiritual beliefs. Community workers may feel concerned or uncomfortable by some practices where there may be a clash with community worker's own values. It is important that these differences do not impact negatively on a worker's ability to deliver a quality service. There are workplace guidelines to follow in these situations and concerns should be discussed with your supervisor.

It is possible to offend a client unknowingly and community workers need to ask clients about cultural practices and request feedback. An honest, genuine and respectful worker/client

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relationship allows for misunderstandings to be addressed and an apology is often all that is needed if one unintentionally offends.
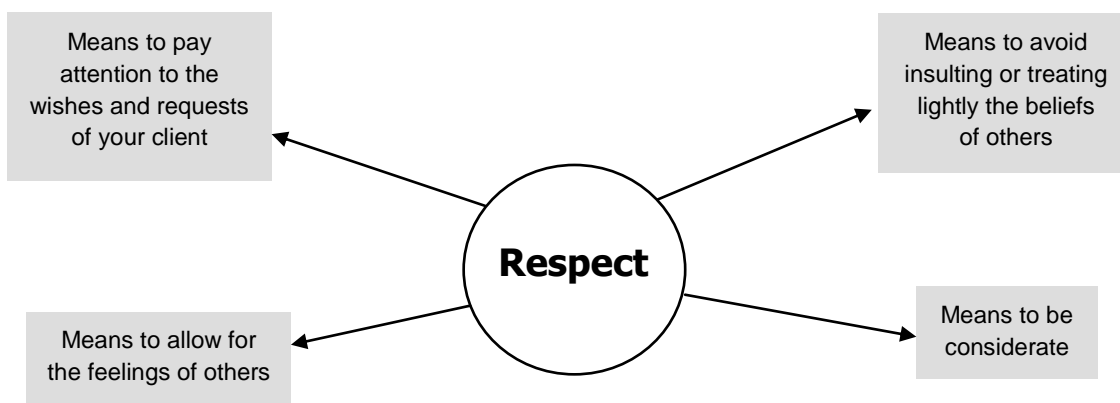
If community workers do not have any knowledge of the customs and cultural practices of a particular client or group, then it is important to undertake some research to gain a better understanding or refer to a cultural broker or mentor who will be able to assist.

Striving to maintain a respectful honest relationship with clients as most people are willing to accommodate differences and are aware of cultural differences outside their own social network. Understanding and appreciating differences promotes acceptance and cooperation and it is important for community workers and their clients to develop a relationship based on mutual respect.

Ways to Acknowledge Different Cultures and Experiences

- **Listen to your client.** They may wish to talk about their childhood or early adult experiences. Perhaps they migrated or arrived in Australia under stressful circumstances. They may also wish to keep some aspects of their cultural experiences private. This means you will have to be sensitive to issues of privacy.

- **Observe your client, and respond appropriately**. Sometimes other factors such as poor socio-economic status, or living in a culture other than one's own, can cause discomfort. When these aspects of life are causing stress, it is often comforting to turn to customs and beliefs that are familiar and safe. Community workers need to be aware of this and respect the values, customs and beliefs of their clients even though they may not fully understand the significance of them.

How do you show respect for a person's spiritual values, customs and beliefs?

Means to pay attention to the wishes and requests of your client

Means to avoid insulting or treating lightly the beliefs of others

Respect

Means to allow for the feelings of others

Means to be considerate

Non-Judgemental Behaviour - What is it?

If we refer to Practice Standard 1.1 of the Australian Community Workers Association it states:

"The community worker's relationships with clients or client groups is based on the principles of respect and human dignity regardless of a client's own attitudes or behaviour."

This reflects the underlying values, principles and philosophy of working in the community services sector. In addition it is important to acknowledge the relevance of strengths-based, person-centred approaches in working with clients. Adopting these approaches emphasise the need for workers to relinquish power and accept that the client is considered the expert on their own life, and any intervention that takes place should be based on decisions made by the client. While it may be true that sometimes clients will make decisions that are not in their best interest, this is an important part of the process. It should be remembered that clients have responsibilities as well as rights, and one of those is to accept responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions.

It is often difficult to act in a non-judgemental way if a client's actions are in conflict with our own personal beliefs and values or what we believe to be in their best interests. Accepting clients for who they are and the decisions they make does not mean we condone unacceptable behaviour, however it does mean that we need to respect the client's individual right to self-determination and that we continue to support them regardless. It is entirely possible to work with a client in a non-judgemental way if we put aside our own personal biases and values and work with the knowledge of the guiding principles and values that underline practice in the sector. Non-judgemental behaviour requires us to remember there are other ways of feeling, thinking and behaving. These behaviours may be equally as effective as ours.

Non-judgemental behaviour means:

- Not expecting people to behave in a certain way
- Accepting the opinion and ideas of others
- Accepting others as individuals with a right to self-determination
- Allowing others to make decisions even if we believe those decisions to be detrimental to a client's wellbeing (within the parameters of the law, e.g., mandatory reporting responsibilities)

Scenario

In the following example, see how Warren's life choices conflict with Susan's personal views about relationships. Susan imposes her views on Warren by giving him unwanted advice.

Consider the following scenario:

Warren is a 48-year-old unemployed Anglo-Australian, who has been attending counselling sessions for his alcohol use and he also suffers from depression. Susan is his counsellor at the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Clinic. He has been struggling for quite some time but has recently started volunteering for 10 hours a week at a local Lifeline store where he met Chau, a 19 year old Vietnamese woman. Chau does not speak much English. Warren and Chau have been going out together, and Warren has told Chau that he loves her and wants to marry her. When Warren brings Chau along to his counselling session, and excitedly announces that they are engaged, Susan does not respond with the same enthusiasm, and tells Warren that she thinks that Chau is too young for him, and that he is rushing into things. Warren feels upset and angry because Susan has expressed disapproval of his relationship.

From this scenario it can be seen that Susan did not respect Warren's life choices, and his right to hold an opinion that was different to her own. The impact of her reaction on their working relationship could be far reaching in that Warren may decide not to continue with his counselling. *How could Susan have approached this scenario?*

Maybe Susan could have:

Acknowledged the presence of Chau - was it appropriate to discuss the situation in front of Chau knowing she has limited English language skills? If both Chau and Warren want to discuss their relationship with Susan, may be an interpreter could be arranged for another session to enable Chau to fully participate.

Another option would be to validate the importance of the relationship to Warren, show genuine interest and ask relevant questions about their plans. If Susan has concerns about the situation she could ask Warren if he would like to discuss the plans in more detail at his next session. In discussing the situation she may put a number of questions to Warren and Chau with an interpreter present, with the aim of assisting Warren to think through how this might impact his life, Chau's life and work with them to help make informed decisions about their future together. It may also be appropriate to refer them to a Relationships Counsellor given Susan's expertise is in the AOD field.

How Susan deals with this situation will depend on her brief length of time within the counselling relationship and her level of expertise.

Compliance with Legislation and Policies of the Organisation

Racial discrimination legislation was introduced into Australia in 1975 and since then, there have been other laws introduced to protect individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds experiencing discrimination. This applies to both clients and workers. Workplaces have policies and procedures to protect both clients and workers from discrimination. Workers should receive training and be aware of these policies and the importance of compliance.

Training may be provided during staff orientation/induction sessions, at meetings and during in-service training. It is then up to individual worker to ensure they respect the rights of others in the workplace with the recognition that discrimination is unlawful. It should be remembered that victims of discrimination have a right to recourse under the law. No staff member should be discriminated against based on cultural background and their eligibility for promotion, professional development opportunities and other advancement should be based on their knowledge and skills and not on other characteristics.

Some examples of policies within an organisation to eliminate bias and discrimination include:

- **Equal Employment Opportunity** - Legislation designed to protect women and other designated groups from discrimination in the workplace to ensure equal opportunity is based on merit and not on individual characteristics or group membership.
- **Access and Equity** - Access which is aimed at ensuring eligible people have equal access to services. This includes removing to barriers to access services - which is the responsibility of the service and not the client. This includes providing brochures in languages which reflect the demographic profile of the community.
- **Anti-discrimination** -Treating any group or person less favourably than another due to personal characteristics or group membership. It is unlawful to discriminate on the

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grounds of gender, age, marital status, pregnancy, sexual preference, race/nationality, religious affiliation or disability.

There is legislation at both state and federal levels and it is important for all staff members to be aware of this legislation and what it means in practice.

Other practices might include:

- Supervisors and managers act as role models for others reflecting the principles of fairness and equity in their behaviour and treatment of all staff
- Creation of workplace culture that values diversity in all in forms
- Accommodating the cultural requirements of staff and clients
- Treating each other with respect and dignity

Chapter Two

Communication

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

George Bernard Shaw

Developing relationships based on mutual trust and respect with clients and co-workers from different cultural backgrounds is an important part of a community services worker's role. In order to do this, workers need to develop a range of communication skills which will enhance their ability for cross-cultural communication.

We take communication for granted when we communicate with people who are familiar to us, however, communication is a complex process and there are many factors that can impact on how we communicate the messages we send and receive. Barriers to effective communication can be more evident in cross-cultural communication due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of cultural differences.

Our aim in cross-cultural communication is to communicate with people from other cultures in a way that minimises misunderstandings and maximises the potential to create strong cross-cultural relationships. It means demonstrating respect towards the other person's culture with a genuine willingness to understand the differences and build mutual trust and confidence in order to communication effectively.

Watch the videos below on cross cultural communication:

- **Intercultural Communication**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSt_op3fQck&list=PLVexp9xeeoEVkdWMhU2uNnwng92yS7hkJ

- **Intercultural Communication Jordan**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMjfjgdmvck&index=16&list=PLVexp9xeeoEVkdWMhU2uNnwng92yS7hkJ

- **What is cross cultural communication?**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT3Adjs3rGM&index=18&list=PLVexp9xeeoEWIsQxRbdZ8nBytLFnNdQds

Overcoming Barriers in Cross-Cultural Communication

There are times when we all have difficulty understanding what is being said to us or interpreting someone's behaviour. It is common to face barriers or challenges in cross-cultural communication and it is important to be able to identify those barriers and know how to overcome them. Some of the barriers in the workplace might include:

Language

If we consider the fact that misunderstandings are common among people who speak the same language, it is not surprising that people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds face barriers in communication. It is important to acknowledge that language is a reflection of one's culture and the meanings of words ascribed in one culture might be different in another.

Behaviour and body language

Body language and other behaviours are an important source of misunderstanding in cross cultural communication. We know that over 80 percent of communication is non-verbal and where there is a language barrier, body language takes on even greater importance. If we consider behaviours such as facial expressions, eye contact, the use of nodding to indicate agreement or understanding along with different cultural expectations/comfort levels around peoples' need for personal space, it becomes clear that overcoming difficulties in cross cultural communication requires some knowledge and understanding of cultural differences and a willingness to learn about the culture of our clients and colleagues.

Stereotypes

We all make judgments and assumptions based on our interpretations of the interactions we have with those in the world around us. Stereotyping is one of the most significant barriers in workplace communication when the stereotype is negative and based on assumptions. Common stereotypes might include, all Muslims are extremists or terrorists, people with mental illness are dangerous and all young people on social security are lazy. It is important to recognise that while cultures may share some common characteristics, people are also individuals and we cannot assume that every individual who identifies with a particular group shares those same characteristics.

Other examples of cross cultural differences

Non-verbal communication includes hand and facial expressions, silence and eye contact. It is considered disrespectful when communicating with an Aboriginal Elder to look that person in the eye. A respectful community services worker might sit next to the Elder instead to ask questions.

It is disrespectful in Arab cultures for a woman to stand over a man. Again a community worker may need to sit beside an Arab man to communicate with them.

Community workers may need to make adjustments to their communication style to accommodate their clients and/or co-workers and this requires a genuine desire to understand how to communicate effectively.

Interpersonal and effective cross-cultural communication skills are developed by talking and listening to others, self-awareness and acquiring the necessary knowledge and understanding of other cultures so you can adapt your communication skills to match the situation you are working with.

Some strategies for overcoming cross-cultural communication barriers include:

- Researching the culture of the client you are working with so you can improve your understanding of cultural traditions, customs and beliefs
- Undertaking cross-cultural awareness training
- Being respectful in all communications and if you don't understand something ask the client directly. Most will be happy to tell you what you need to know.
- Being aware of body language and how it may be interpreted
- Paying attention to your tone of voice and pace of your speech.
- Asking the client to repeat what they have said if you have not understood
- Using resources to assist with communication where there are language barriers such as printed information in the appropriate language, drawings or diagrams, etc.

Use of Interpreters

Where there are language barriers and the information that needs to be conveyed involves information to do with legislative compliance as in duty of care, confidentiality or clients legal rights - it is important to use an interpreter. Family members are sometimes appropriate, however, it is often better to use an independent professional interpreter to ensure information is conveyed accurately. In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients an Aboriginal Elder or Cultural Broker from the community might be preferable.

Reasons for using a professional interpreter include:

- **Training:** They understand the cultural sensitivities involved
- **Objectivity**: They will ensure information conveyed and received is accurate and reflects the client's situation
- **Crisis-management:** They will assist to ensure clarity in what is being communicated should the client be in crisis mode
- **Code of Ethics**: They are bound by a strict Code of Ethics and are impartial where as a family member may not be
- **Language Comfort**: The client may be more comfortable communicating in their first language.

It is also important for workers to acknowledge and direct their communication to the client and not the interpreter. The interpreter is there to assist and should remain in the background so the focus is centred on the client.

Watch this video on using an interpreter.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4voquDnkbM

Another important point to be aware of when you are engaged in cross-cultural communication is that English literacy or proficiency does not equate with intelligence. You cannot assume that because a client is limited in their ability to speak, read or write English that they are unintelligent.

If you are having serious difficulty with cross cultural communication, always refer to your Supervisor.

In an earlier section we talked about importance of values in how we treat others. It is important to:

- Understand the concept of values
- Think deeply about values you consciously and unconsciously live by
- Recognise how these values shape and control our actions and responses to everyday life

Being sensitive to and respectful of the values of our clients is important in building trusting relationships. Try to learn about the beliefs, values and attitudes of others. To do this effectively, it is necessary to:

- Listen and show a genuine interest in the background and cultural experiences of our clients
- Maintain a respect for their right not to discuss certain issues
- Learn not to question or pry into intimate areas of a person's life

Use appropriate active listening skills and ask appropriate, non-threatening questions such as:

- How can I assist you?
- How could we make this activity feel acceptable to you?
- How could we make this plan more appropriate to your needs?
- What would you like to change in this situation?

It is important for community workers to remember they are part of a team. So when faced with difficult situations, collaborating with colleagues or consulting a supervisor can assist a worker to explore all options. It is important to be mindful of confidentiality and ensure any discussion that takes place is on a needs basis and is respectful of the client.

In a crisis, a community worker may experience strong emotions, anxiety, and/or distress that may affect the decision-making process. If a community worker feels uncomfortable and is experiencing difficulty making an appropriate decision, they must consult their supervisor and seek support. Sometimes it is appropriate to refer a client on rather than try to address issues that are beyond a workers capacity to deal with. Maybe it is in the best interest of the client to receive assistance from a person with similar attitudes and beliefs. There are appropriate cultural and spiritual groups throughout the states and territories. If specialised help is needed, resources are available and referring the client to another service using appropriate protocols may be a better option.

Individual differences and beliefs affect everything we do and say and we may not even be aware of these differences. If we base our expectations of others on our previous experiences and have not had experience outside of our own culture, we may find our expectations of others are misplaced.

For example, male and female roles are often clearly defined along cultural boundaries. There may be different speech patterns, codes of behaviour, clothing and gender specific tasks to complete. A community worker should ask if in doubt. Otherwise, they may cause offence without being aware.

In all these areas, the community worker should take their cues from the behaviour of those around them. As roles may differ, according to age and family status, once again it may be necessary to ask. Remember, it is better to ask than risk offending someone.

Client Have a Right to Express Their Feelings

A person's feelings and thoughts form the core of their personality. How they express these thoughts and feelings is generally shaped by social and cultural rules and traditions. These expressions of emotion are also affected by:

- Age and gender, e.g., males often feel bound by social custom not to express extreme grief in the same way as females. Males may also feel bound to express extreme anger far more than females.
- Personality and life experiences, e.g., an outgoing and social person is more likely to share their feelings of joy and happiness with others than a quiet, shy person
- Depth of thoughts or feelings, e.g., the loss of a partner or child will arouse deeper emotions than the loss of a distant relative
- Other stresses and environmental factors, e.g., a homeless person will have stronger feelings about the onset of winter than a person with a home

These emotional responses reflect your feelings. From the moment you are born, you begin to express feelings as you experience pain, pleasure and hunger. Your mood relates to the type and level of emotion.

Feelings are experienced as we try to satisfy our emotional and physical needs. The simple needs of food, water and sleep are a response to feeling hungry, thirsty or tired. Adults learn to meet many of their own simple needs as they grow. However, they look to others to meet their need for love, affection and support.

A person's mental and physical health is affected by their ability to express these emotions and feelings. An emotional response is not always obvious when we communicate with others. However, we should remember to consider the feelings behind the words and actions, even if the feelings are not openly expressed.

Feelings and emotions need to be expressed and strong feelings sometimes need to be overtly expressed. This can be embarrassing or uncomfortable for others if it is in contrast to what one has grown up with.

In stressful situations a community worker will need to remember that all feelings are normal and may be expressed in a variety of ways. These expressions are part of human behaviour. Showing empathy can validate a client's experience, however, if a client is expressing their feelings in a way that may be destructive or dangerous, the worker will need to report this to their supervisor and act in accordance with their duty of care responsibilities.

In the following example, Paul respects Henry's right to express his feelings of anger and distress.

Consider the following scenario:

Henry comes to a counselling session feeling really distressed and angry. He had a fight with his dad on the weekend and ended up getting very drunk. He has been abstinent for 6 weeks; he is angry with his father, and angry with himself for breaking his dry spell. He is also very concerned that he has jeopardised his employment and may not get his driver's license back. His Community Services Worker Paul, does not express impatience or berate Henry for his slip up, but instead encourages Henry to talk about what happened and to discuss his strong feelings. He is willing to try and see things from Henry's perspective, and he listens empathetically while Henry talks. Once Henry has calmed down, Paul identifies treatment options with the therapeutic goal of helping Henry identify relapse triggers, reinforcing his desire to stay abstinent and his commitment to recovery. Because Paul has taken the time to allow Henry to express and vent his strong emotions, the lapse has now become an opportunity to strengthen his relapse prevention skills.

Community workers may experience a range of emotional expressions from their clients. Sometimes you may recognise some of these feelings and relate them to incidents in your own life.

Emotional expression may include:

- Gestures, e.g., wringing of hands, throwing arms in the air, hugging of others and self, stamping feet
- Loud or lengthy crying, laughing or talking
- Acting without stopping to think how expressions of emotions might be received by others, e.g., hugging or kissing strangers
- Using music or other forms of celebration and ritual at special times of the year, e.g., unusual expressions of goodwill at Christmas time, hugging others at funerals, wearing black or other coloured clothing as a mark of respect

A community worker needs to be familiar with their client's emotional responses, and the client's case notes may have information recording special cultural traditions and rituals or individual characteristics that are relevant to the client. Often these customs provide information about traditional ways of expressing emotions.

To end this Chapter below are some tips for improving cross-cultural communication skills:

Tip	Explanation
Slow down	Even when English is the common language in a cross-cultural situation, this does not mean the community worker should speak at normal speed. Slow down, speak clearly, ensure pronunciation is clear and use short sentences.
Do not shout	If a client doesn't understand community workers, raising their voice will not help. Try to rephrase the word or questions or use a visual cue to assist.
Separate questions	Try not to ask double questions such as, "Do you want to carry on or shall we stop here?" In a cross-cultural situation only the first or second question may have been comprehended. Let the client answer one question at a time.
Avoid negative questions	Many cross-cultural communication misunderstandings have been caused by the use of negative questions and answers. In English we answer, "yes" if the answer is affirmative and "no" if it is negative. In other cultures a '"yes" or "no" may only be indicating whether the questioner is right or wrong. For example, the response to "Are you not coming?" may be "yes", meaning, "Yes, I am not coming."
Take turns	Cross-cultural communication is enhanced through taking turns to talk, making a point and then listening to the response.
Write it down or draw a picture	If a community worker is unsure whether something has been understood, they should write it down and check. There are resources written in many languages available on the internet to assist in communicating with clients. Services may also have printed materials in relevant languages.
Be supportive	Effective cross-cultural communication is in essence about being comfortable. Giving encouragement to

Tip	Explanation
	those with limited English skills gives them confidence, support and increases their trust in you.
Check meanings	When communicating across cultures never assume the other party has understood. Be an active listener. Summarise what has been said in order to verify it. This is a very effective way of ensuring accurate cross-cultural communication has taken place.
Avoid slang	Even the most well-educated person from a different cultural background will not have a complete knowledge of slang, idioms and sayings. The danger is that the words will be understood but the meaning missed. No colloquialisms, (i.e. "hang on a tick") or double negatives (i.e. "not bad") should be used.
Watch the humour	When using humour think whether it will be understood in the other culture.
Maintain etiquette	Many cultures have certain etiquette when communicating. It is always a good idea to undertake some cross-cultural awareness training or at least do some research on the client's culture.
Sequence instructions	When giving instructions, provide the client with a clear sequence; one at a time if need be. Make procedures very clear.
Be aware of non-verbals	Be aware of non-verbal signals given off by yourself and the other person. Use gestures and non-verbal techniques where appropriate.
Display the right attitude	Display an attitude of patience towards the other person and show positive regard and respect and a non-judgemental attitude.

(Adapted from http://my.englishclub.com/profiles/blogs/cross-cultural-communication)

Chapter Three

Conflict Resolution

"*Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude.*"

- William James

Our culture, our upbringing and our life experiences determine what feels normal and right to us. Other cultures may have different ways of living that may seem strange to those outside of that cultural group. These differences may lead to misunderstandings and prejudice.

Issues That May Cause Conflict

There are many causes of workplace conflict and developing strategies to resolve conflict in the workplace is important for productivity and morale. Conflict can occur between colleagues or between clients and workers and resolving conflict in a constructive way involves identifying some of the underlying causes which are often to do with people having different points of view or making judgements based on their own values. Poor communication, ideas about what is more important or opinions on how things should be done can all lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

The importance of values and their impact on conflict cannot be underestimated as beliefs and behaviour are strongly influenced by values. Understanding the source of conflict requires the ability to step back and analyse what is going on from an objective perspective and being able to respectfully consider and listen to the views of the person you are in conflict with. Defensiveness often has to do with someone feeling their position is threatened and defensiveness is a barrier to resolving conflict.

Empathy is important in resolving conflict as if you are able to put yourself in the other persons shoes and see the situation from their perspective, this may help you to understand the source of the differences and find solutions. This can apply to both clients and colleagues and it shows the person you are genuinely trying to understand the concerns from their perspective and this can reduce hostility.

Respecting a person's point of view is recognising that having a different perspective on an issue is not wrong or right but just different, and each has a right to their own point of view. When different points of view are brought together, conflict can sometimes be healthy and productive in a workplace as it can add to the creativity of a team.

A person's opinion is respected by:

- Listening to their ideas and points of view
- Owning and expressing one's own feelings and opinions
- Using a tone of voice that is calm and moderate
- Being aware of body language, e.g. looking at the person, having relaxed and non-confronting body language
- Finding common areas of agreement
- Remembering that each person is of equal importance when discussing a subject that both care about.

Conflict with Clients

If a community worker has a difference of opinion with a client, it is necessary to speak respectfully, and recognise that clients have a right to complain about services they receive and it needs to be accepted as feedback. This can lead to improvements in service delivery and in some cases assists workers to reflect on their practice. *Is the client's complaint or issue due to a cultural misunderstanding and if so is there an opportunity to learn more about this client's culture?*

Remember everyone has a right to his or her own beliefs, and opinions. The difficulty often occurs when both parties forget this. Conflict may occur when people have strong reactions to different opinions and ideas, or if there is misunderstanding between people from different backgrounds. If conflict results in one or both parties disrespecting each other, the ability to use empathy and actively listen to each other can be lost and resolving the misunderstanding will become more difficult.

In conflict with clients it is important for workers to ensure they abide by the organisation's policies and procedures, code of conduct and seek appropriate support in dealing with the matter in a professional manner.

Some examples of cultural differences that may lead to misunderstandings include:

- Communication difficulties related to language or other barriers
- Information that is not clear, has not been understood and not enough time has been taken to ensure both parties have an agreed understanding of the issues
- Body language, gestures that are misinterpreted
- People who become stressed and have emotions that prevent clarification of the issues
- Not dealing with issues in a timely manner when they happen

To address cross-cultural misunderstandings, workers need to:

- Clearly identify the issues and sources of conflict
- Identify cultural differences
- Find common ground or interests
- Be willing to be empathetic in an effort to resolve conflict
- Be prepared to deal with issues as they arise
- Respect others points of difference and seek support of supervisors, where appropriate
- Follow appropriate grievance policies and procedures
- Comply with anti-discrimination legislation and workplace Codes of Conduct

In developing an understanding of other cultures, it is important to:

- Recognise the existence of differences and that not everyone shares the same values or looks at life in the same way.
- Use empathy and consider what it might be like for you if others disrespect your beliefs and the values and ideals that are important to you
- Challenge yourself and your own preconceived ideas about other cultures and develop self-awareness so you can identify how your own cultural experiences have influenced and shaped your perceptions of others who are different
- Avoid stereotyping and treat people as individuals

Mediation

Use of mediation

Mediation is a cooperative voluntary process whereby a middle person acts in the role as a go-between or facilitator. The role of mediator in the mediation process is to assist the parties in resolving their dispute, to provide both parties with opportunities to put forward their views and assist in analysing the problem and looking for solutions.

Mediation with clients or their family

Mediation has been shown to be successful in resolving disputes with clients. It is important to follow organisational policies and procedures, which would include reporting and documenting any conflicts with clients and/or their families.

If you have conflict with a client, approach the supervisor in the first instance to act as a mediator or to seek external mediators from multicultural organisations (with the client's

consent). If internal processes fail to resolve disputes with clients then they have a right to seek resolution from external organisations such as funding bodies and the Community Services Ombudsman. See the links below for information on external complaints processes.

- **Family & Community Services http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docs_menu/about_us/contact_us/complaints.html**

- **Ombudsman https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-work/community-and-disability-services/community-services**

Mediation with co-workers

When a community worker has a conflict with a co-worker, they should follow their organisation's policies and procedures. This may include the use of a conflict resolution process or the grievance procedure used within the workplace. View the video "Employment relations and conflict resolution" to learn more about dealing appropriately with workplace conflict. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDWOPu9Y6oM

The mediator could be:

- A senior from the same work area if the community worker and co-worker are from the same department
- A team leader or other senior staff member
- An independent person from human resources management
- An external mediator.

Further information can be found at:

- Conflict Resolution Network   http://www.crnhq.org/

- Fairwork Ombudsman   http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/best-practice-guides/effective-dispute-resolution

Additional Resources

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities http://www.adec.org.au/index.php/about-adec

Adventist Volunteer Service http://www.adventistvolunteers.org

Australian Bureau of Statistics http://www.abs.gov.au/

Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection
http://www.immi.gov.au/Pages/Welcome.aspx

Australian Human Rights Centre   http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/ahric/

Australian Human Rights Commission https://www.humanrights.gov.au/

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
http://50years.aiatsis.gov.au/

Australian Multicultural Foundation   http://www.amf.net.au

Centre for Cultural Diversity in Aging   http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au

Centre for culture, ethnicity and health http://www.ceh.org.au/

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade http://www.dfat.gov.au

Ezine   http://ezinearticles.com

Human Rights Watch http://hrwa.org.au/

Queensland Health Multicultural Health   http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/default.asp

Racism. No Way http://www.racismnoway.com.au

The Cross Cultural Health Care Program   http://xculture.org/about/

The NSW Multi Cultural Health Communication Service
http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/utility

The WWW Virtual Library on Migration and Ethnic Relations   http://vlib.org/InternationalAffairs

VEA Australia- New Zealand Cultural Diversity and Nursing Practice
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9u_r4lmdC3g

VEA Australia- New Zealand Aged Care and Cultural Diversity
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSdqWvLKglc

World Health Organisation http://www.who.int/countries/aus/en/

Exploring other cultures

Religions of the World   http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0113529.html
http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/religion/wrc.lingnet.orghttp://www.religioustolerance.org

A Pakistani-based website containing many academic articles on all facets of Islamic religion
and culture http://www.themodernreligion.com

An Israeli-based website with information about the background to everyday Jewish customs
http://www.ahavat-israel.com

Information on Buddhism from
http://www.buddhanet.netwww.kalavinka.orgwww.urbandharma.org

Sri Lankan cultural information http://www.lankalibrary.com/rit.html

Indian cultures and religions (including Hindu and Sikh)
http://indians.australians.comhttp://www.hinduism.co.zawww.sikhs.orgwww.sikhnet.com

Extensive information on the Eastern Orthodox Church http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith

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