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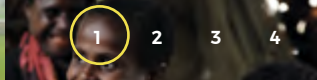
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Intercultural Learning

Critical preparation for international student travel

The ability to recognise and understand your own cultural context is a prerequisite to understanding and interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. An intercultural learning approach encourages us to develop an understanding of culture and cultural difference, through reflecting on our own context and experience.

▷ *Click here to watch the video: Welcome*

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Acknowledgements

Elise Howard   Daniela Vavrova   Sophie White

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These intercultural learning modules will develop your understanding of cultural difference, diversity and the critical perspectives that will add a new and important dimension to your international experience. Intercultural learning requires more than developing your understanding of cultural customs or dos and don'ts. These modules will challenge you to think about the deeper issues of **culture**, **race**, **imperialism**, **white privilege** and **cultural diversity** that underpin all intercultural interactions. Intercultural learning also requires learning about ourselves. Approach these modules with an open mind and be prepared to critically reflect on your own perspectives, which shape your interpretation of intercultural experiences. Developing this critical perspective will prepare you to remain open to cultural difference, an important skill to establish as you set off on your intercultural experience.

▷ *Click here to watch the video:*
What is intercultural learning?

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THIS INTERCULTURAL LEARNING eBOOK

Why an eBook on intercultural learning?

This book emerged as a result of our own experiences of preparing students for international study opportunities, as well as insights from research that we have conducted into international student exchange in Australia. We recognised that while there were some excellent resources available that addressed the practical aspects of such preparation, and some useful material on location-specific cultural issues, there was little available to support students in developing a more 'critical' approach to preparing for international study experiences. It is our strongly held belief that such a critical approach helps to ensure that students are not merely 'tourists' passively experiencing another culture, but rather have the tools to actively engage in an exploration of the complex dynamics of culture and, through critical reflection, to link this new understanding to their own experience.

What this eBook isn't....

This intercultural learning eBook is not intended to provide guidance on the practical aspects of preparation for international study experiences. Support in ensuring that travellers are aware of issues relating to passports, visas, travel medicine etc., is important, but best provided by those organising the specific travel opportunity. This resource is also not intended as a replacement for location-specific cultural information and preparation. Learning about the culture of your destination, including appropriate cultural etiquette, is an important aspect of pre-travel preparation, and a range of other freely available resources do a good job of providing this information. This eBook isn't therefore intended as a stand-alone resource that addresses all aspects of student preparation.

And what it is....

This resource is intended to equip students with a 'critical lens' through which their preparation process and experience of international travel can be viewed. A critical lens allows students to apply a deeper and more complex analysis to their experiences, and, when combined with a critically reflective approach, to enhance their learning about culture and its context. Such a critical lens inevitably requires reflection not just on the culture of others, but on our own cultural identity and positioning – both at home and when abroad. This intercultural learning resource therefore sits alongside the traditional practical and location-specific aspects of preparation for international travel and is intended to complement and extend these rather than replace them.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LEARNER

The learning style in these modules is approached from an 'adult' learning perspective. Your wealth of existing knowledge and experience informs your learning, and your encounters with new concepts and information is inevitably 'filtered' through the lens of that experience. Forming connections between the 'existing' and the 'new' is therefore an important part of intercultural learning.

LEARNING GOALS

Each module has a distinct learning goal:

1   Culture → To develop a critical awareness of the multi-dimensional, nuanced nature of culture, and cultural difference.

2   Imperialism & Cultural Diversity → To understand the historical and continuing impact of imperialism on cultural diversity.

3   Racism & Privilege → To develop a critical appreciation of the multiple ways in which racism and privilege impact upon an individual's life experiences and choices.

4   Critical Reflection & Culture → To understand the role of critical reflection in making explicit aspects of an individual's cultural self, and to articulate how culture shapes values, beliefs and worldviews.

5   Intercultural Practice → To develop an understanding of some of the knowledge, values, and skills required when working across cultures.

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LEARNING STRATEGIES

These four strategies will help you to get the most out of the Intercultural Learning Modules. Click on each icon for a more detailed explanation.

1

Engage

read, watch and listen to the readings, videos and podcasts designed to develop your understanding of each topic.

2

Discuss

participate in discussion activities with your lecturer and peers.

3

Revise & Reflect

critically reflect on the content from the standpoint of your own views and experience.

4

Step Forward

select from a list of useful resources relevant to each unit to continue with your learning.

Engage actively in these activities to consolidate your understanding of concepts central to intercultural learning and practice. They will assist you to develop transferable knowledge and skills to enhance your studies for all subjects in your chosen degree.

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LEARNING TOOLS

Throughout the modules you will notice the following icons. Clicking on them will link you to:

KEY TERMS

Common terms used in intercultural or cross-cultural literature, learning and practice are hyperlinked throughout this eBook. Click on the links to learn more about these key terms. As with many of the subjects you will encounter in your studies, some of the terms specific to this field of study are contested. Engage frequently with this glossary to develop a deeper, critical, and more sophisticated understanding of the concepts used throughout these modules.

VIDEOS

The videos cover the important ideas from each module. They were created with the students who experienced intercultural fieldwork practice, and their mentors and creators of the modules. We wish to thank all those who shared their experiences and their ideas in these videos.

LEARNING RESOURCES

The Learning Resources page includes further videos to watch, useful websites and articles to read so you can take your learning further. The external links to videos and articles referred to throughout the modules are provided here, so if you find any links that are broken in the modules, try the full web addresses listed in the Learning Resources page.

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LEARNING TOOLS

In the videos you will hear from the academic team behind this eBook and a number of students that have had recent experiences of exchange. Find out more about who you'll be hearing from:

ACADEMIC TEAM

Dr Peter Jones (PhD, MEd (Adult Learning), BSW(Hons), FHERDSA) is a Senior Lecturer at James Cook University (JCU) and has facilitated exchange programs for JCU students visiting India and Thailand as well as arranging for Thai and Indian students to visit JCU on exchange since 2011. Peter is a multi-award winning educator with a particular interest in international student exchange.

Dr Narayan Gopalkrishnan (PhD, MBA, B.Com) is a Senior Lecturer at James Cook University. Narayan has worked in Australia and overseas, in universities, NGOs and the private sector and researches extensively on intercultural learning and was formerly the Director for the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Associate Professor Debra Miles (PhD, MSW, BSW) of JCU has coordinated a number of student exchanges to India and Thailand and has been an invited speaker on the nature of international collaboration at a number of conferences in India and Thailand. She is the project leader of a major research project exploring Best Practice in International Student Exchange funded by the Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching.

STUDENT TEAM

Manu Plackal visited JCU on exchange during 2015. Manu studies at De Paul Institute of Science and Technology in Kerala, India.

Dhammika is a second year JCU student at the Cairns campus. Though she has not been on a JCU exchange program, she has experienced and observed inter-cultural dynamics in Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Australia and India. Dhammika's birth cultural heritage was to a Tamil Indian Christian father and Sinhalese Buddhist mother. She was educated and commenced her career in England and maintains close family connections and traditions with relatives in India. Dhammi takes great delight in networking and assisting the Indian graduates who visit Cairns on the exchange program. On completion of her studies, Dhammika aspires to advocate for human rights in culturally diverse environments.

Verity studied with JCU from 2013-2016 and in 2015 was a part of the International Exchange trip to Kerala, India. The trip provided Verity with her first opportunity to travel overseas and Verity reports that it was an enriching experience that encouraged both her personal and professional development. Since finishing her studies, Verity works with women escaping domestic violence, an area for which she has great passion.

Erin graduated from JCU, Cairns from Bachelor of Social Work in 2016 and is now employed as a Women's Health and Sexual Assault Counsellor in Townsville. Erin participated in the International exchange trip to India as part of her studies in 2014 and additionally was able to host visiting students from India in Cairns in 2015. Erin has actively maintained connections with those she met along the way, both from Australia and in India and continues to draw from this experience in both a professional and personal context. Erin hopes that others' experiences are as equally introspective and fulfilling as hers.

Bronwyn Linder is a former JCU student who finished her studies in 2016 and has successfully found employment in 2017. Bronwyn participated in a JCU exchange program to India in 2015 and likes to say that she is forever thankful to JCU for the opportunity of a cultural interchange as a student. Family is everything to Bronwyn, who is a mother of four daughters. Bronwyn aspires to further studies and international development work once her daughters have flown the coop.

Shannon Norbury studied with JCU from 2013-2016 and participated in an exchange program in 2014 as part of her studies. Shannon has successfully found full time employment and continues to work to serve communities in the Townsville area.

2

MODULE 1

Culture

Learning goal: To develop a critical awareness of the multi-dimensional, nuanced nature of culture, and cultural difference.

▷ *Click here to watch the video: Culture*

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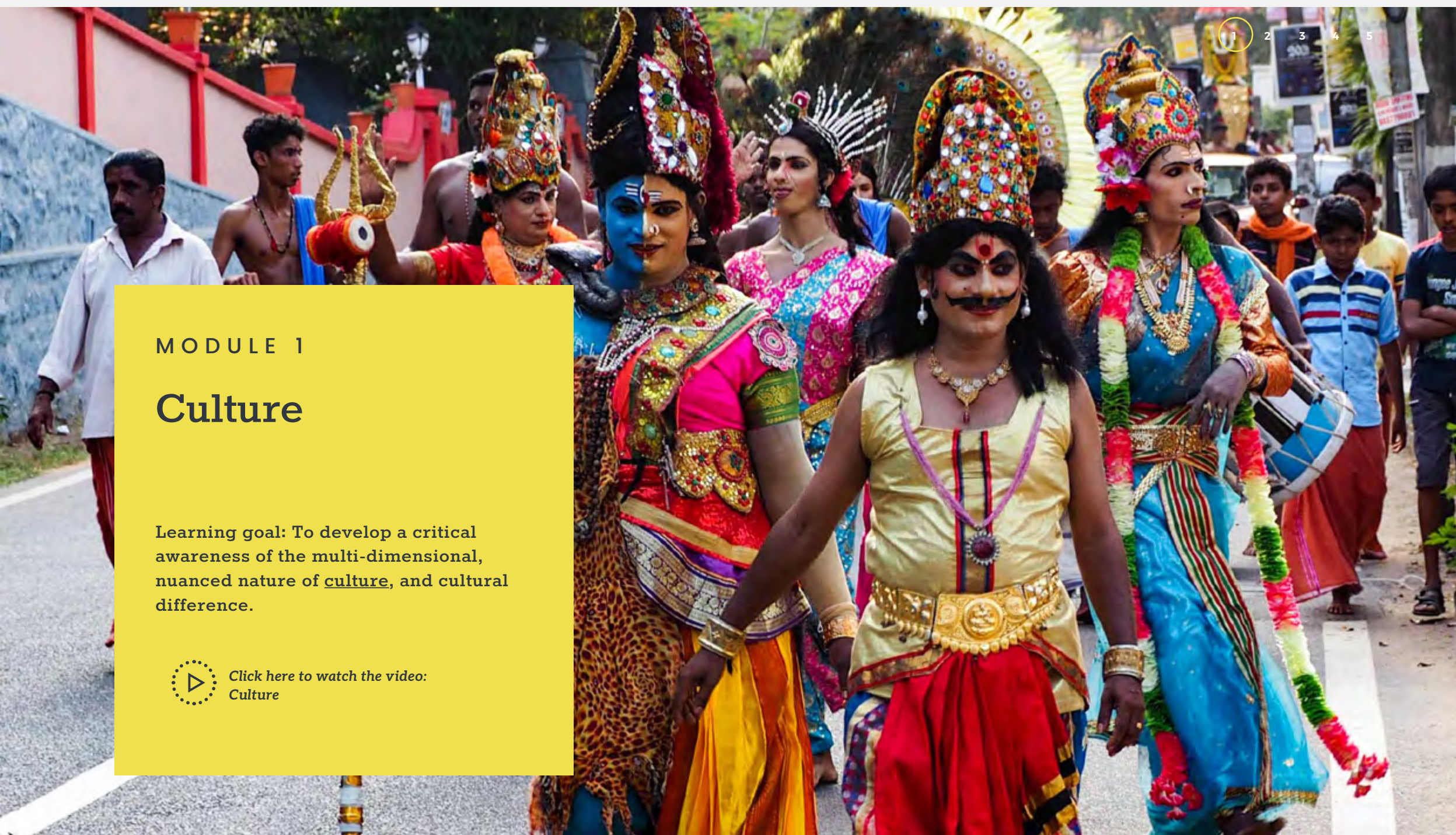KEY TERMS   LEARNING RESOURCES   REF.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE & CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

The ability to recognise and understand your own cultural context is seen as an essential prerequisite for understanding and interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Let's begin by grappling with the idea of culture itself.

This module examines the highly nuanced, multi-dimensional, and dynamic nature of the concept of culture. The concept of culture is contested[1], as it can mean different things to different people and in different contexts. Part of the difficulty in arriving at a comprehensive definition stems from the fact that when talking about culture we are usually referring to a rather limited 'visible' dimension (such as language, works of art, dress, etc.), and not necessarily considering the rather large 'invisible' area of concepts and ideas (such as values, attitudes, and worldviews).

An iceberg is often used as a metaphor for culture; on the surface we are able to see the more obvious aspects of culture, however, there are many aspects that lie deeper and require time and critical thinking to comprehend.

▷ Click here to watch the video: What is culture?

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Click on the dots beneath the surface of the water to discover the 'invisible' aspects of culture.

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Common misconceptions of culture can be created by using definitions that limit understandings of culture to discrete and readily identifiable categories.[1]

Consider these three different ways of defining culture:

... the eight major factors which set groups apart from one another, and which give individuals and groups elements of identity: age, class, race, ethnicity, levels of ability, language, spiritual belief systems, educational achievement, and gender differences.[3]

... an abstract concept that refers to learned and shared patterns of perceiving and adapting to the world. Culture is reflected in its products: the learned, shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours that are characteristic of a society or population. Culture is not a static phenomenon; it is dynamic and ever-changing, but it maintains a sense of coherence.[4]

Culture in its widest sense can be understood as a specific way of thinking, acting and feeling about one's own actions and the actions of others. This includes conscious or underlying explanations of the world and one's own and other people's place within it. It also encompasses beliefs, faiths, ideologies and worldviews, which we call upon to assert reality, truths, values and ideas of good and bad. Culture as a group phenomenon develops further and changes according to changes in society. Culture as the property of an individual is open to further development depending on knowledge and experience.[5]

What do you notice about these three definitions of culture?

What are the differences and similarities in the definitions?

Which definitions capture the visible aspects of culture and which capture the invisible?

These definitions highlight differences between narrow and broad conceptualisations of culture. The first definition captures the factors that most people probably recognise and take into consideration when thinking about culture. By contrast, the second definition suggests a more expansive and inclusive view of culture. Similarly, the final definition emphasises culture's existence as a variable and fluid construct, both on a group and individual level.

In the last two definitions, culture is understood as dynamic and relational, multi-dimensional, and expansive. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESC0) stresses (as UNESCO is one organisation) the importance of understanding cultures not as 'self-enclosed or static entities'; rather:

Cultures are like clouds, their confines ever changing, coming together or moving apart ... and sometimes merging to produce new forms arising from those that preceded them, yet differing from them entirely ... Culture is the very substratum of all human activities, which derive their meaning and value from it.[6]

Which definitions align with your ideas of culture? Has your idea of culture shifted? If so, in what way?

Key point

Avoid falling into a very limited and narrow understanding of what we mean when we talk about culture. Dynamic and fluid approaches to defining culture have a much better chance of capturing a sense of the complex, changing and multi-dimensional nature of this concept.

1   Culture is relational and fluid, providing frames of reference for negotiating the world.

2   Culture is systemic, occurring within, between, and across individuals, families, communities, and regions.

3   Each individual carries culture – culture is not simply a construct applied to 'others' apart from 'us'.

4   Culture embodies heterogeneity, carries temporal qualities, and cannot be singularised.[2]

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For an inspired and impassioned insight into some of the 'exquisite' manifestations of these elements of culture, watch this short video by Canadian anthropologist, Wade Davis.
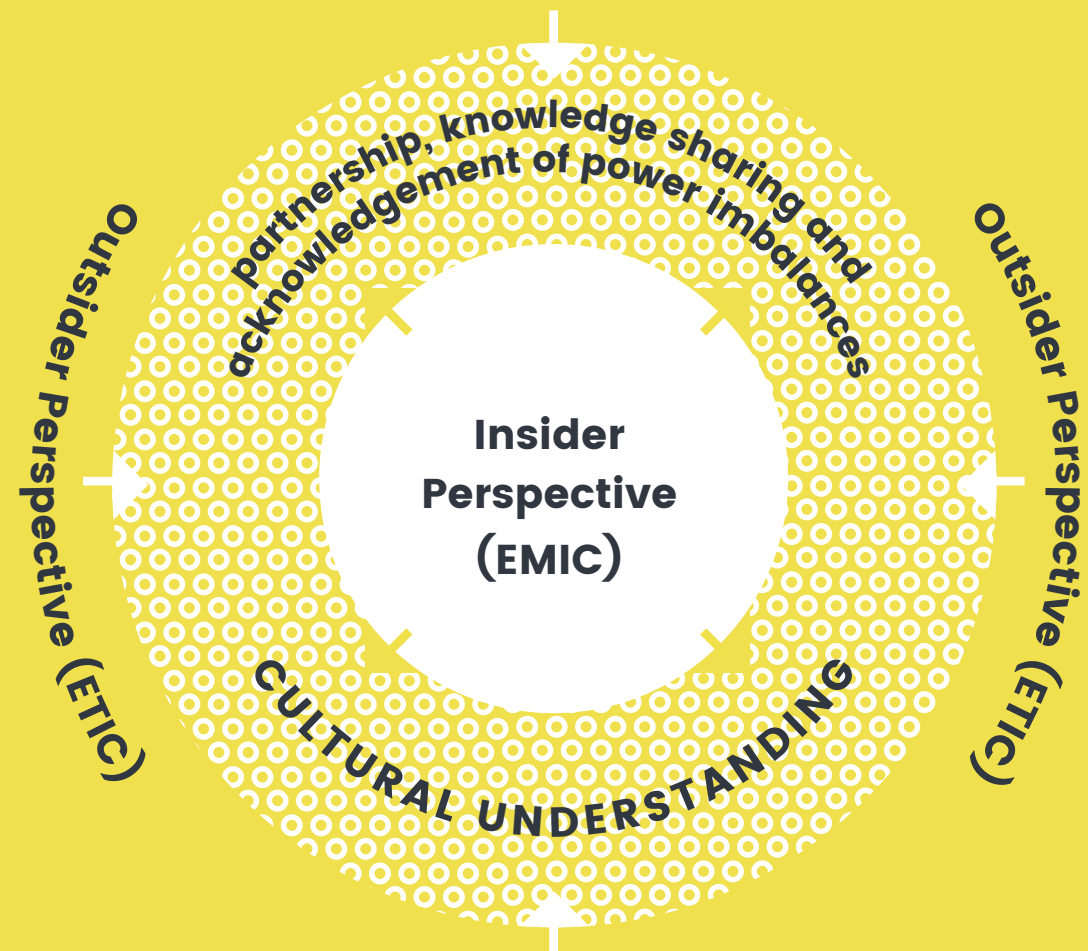
▷ *Click here to watch Wade Davis's video: The Worldwide Web of Belief and Ritual*

While we have now developed some understanding of culture and cultural difference, we need to be aware of the limitations to fully understand other cultures. We need to recognise the plurality of cultures and be aware of any tendencies towards essentialism, or generalisations that reduce complex and dynamic cultures to some key definitive factors.[7] Essentialism of culture minimises the internal differences within that culture. The challenge is to recognise and embrace diversity through respect and inclusion rather than a process of exclusion.[8]

Given culture is dynamic, complex and prone to generalisation, the notion of intercultural competence is critiqued by a number of authors. Competence "refers to the ability to do something successful or efficiently. The focus remains on what people do rather than on the knowledge they have".[8] Practitioners should question the idea of the 'cultural expert' and challenge top-down, outsider, or etic approaches to understanding culture. Alternatively, an emic approach, or from within, entails collaborative processes where both outsiders and insiders are changed by cultural interactions. This requires developing greater awareness of self, sharing knowledge, creating partnerships and acknowledging issues of power, **racism** and the dynamic nature of culture.

In other words, when we begin to recognise the complexity of culture, it becomes apparent that ways of thinking about culture which tend to oversimplify, reduce and homogenise cultures are inadequate. If we are interested in understanding our own culture, and in learning about the cultures of other people, an approach that recognises and values this complexity is a valuable starting point.

partnership, knowledge sharing and acknowledgement of power imbalances

Outsider Perspective (ETIC)

Outsider Perspective (ETIC)

Insider Perspective (EMIC)

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

▷ *Click here to watch the video: What are emic and etic approaches?*

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REFLECTION TASK

Option 1:

In light of the module discussion regarding the complex, multi-dimensional and nuanced nature of culture, Dr Narayan Gopalkrishnan raises some concerns about the notion of cultural competence. Watch this short video and consider whether you agree or disagree with the idea of becoming culturally competent.

Click here to watch the video: What is cultural competence?

Discuss your insights and ideas with your lecturer, fellow students, family or friends.

Option 2:

In light of the previous discussion regarding the complex, multi-dimensional and nuanced nature of culture, and in consideration of Wade Davis's discussion on the "exquisite variations" between cultures, reflect on your own culture by answering the following questions:

Q1 What is your culture?

Q2 What are the most important features of your culture?

Q3 How have your values been moulded and shaped by your culture?

Q4 How would you describe the source of your values – are they religious values, social values, personal values, professional values?

Q5 Can you see a connection between these values and the institutions that have moulded and shaped who you are: your family, your religion, your school, your peers, and so on?

Q6 Do you have friends from different cultures?

Q7 What are their cultures and how are they different from yours?

Q8 Is your culture determined by your family origin or is it grounded in where you were born?

OR

Q1 How would you describe yourself as a 'cultural being'?

Q2 How is reality understood in your particular culture? Is it viewed as dualistic or holistic?

Q3 What is the concept of self in your particular culture? Is it viewed as a separate or interconnected part of the natural, non-human world?

Q4 What are some of the key historical events that have shaped your cultural concept of self or in other words, your 'cultural being'?

Q5 What is the concept of time? Is it viewed as linear, circular, segmented, or future-oriented?

Q6 What is the concept of relationships, including the differences in gender roles?

Q7 How is morality understood in your culture? How is this understanding of morality evidenced in your day-to-day actions?[9]

Are there any insights from your reflections that surprise you? Discuss this with your lecturer, fellow students, family or friends.

Further your engagement with the topic of culture and cultural difference by referring to the Learning Resources.

Click here to go to the Learning Resources page

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MODULE 2

Imperialism & Cultural Diversity

Learning goal: To understand the historical and continuing impact of imperialism on cultural diversity.

▶ *Click here to watch the video: Imperialism*

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It's not change or technology that threatens the integrity of the 'ethnosphere'... it is power ... the crude face of domination.[10]

The previous module introduced you to some different and more inclusive ways of thinking about culture. Key to these was the idea that culture is complex and multi-dimensional and that we should resist ways of thinking about culture which are over-simplistic, narrow and reductionist.

We now begin to turn our attention to some of the broader issues that are essential in developing a sophisticated and critical understanding of culture. This unit explores the historical and continuing impact of **imperialism** on **cultural diversity**. Imperialism is itself a complex concept, but the relationship between culture, cultural diversity and imperialism is so significant that grappling with this idea is very important.

IMPERIALISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The concept of imperialism is used across disciplines, often with meanings that are taken for granted. Imperialism tends to be used in at least four different ways when describing the form of European imperialism which 'started' in the fifteenth century:

1   Imperialism as economic expansion.

2   Imperialism as the subjugation of 'others'.

3   Imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realisation.

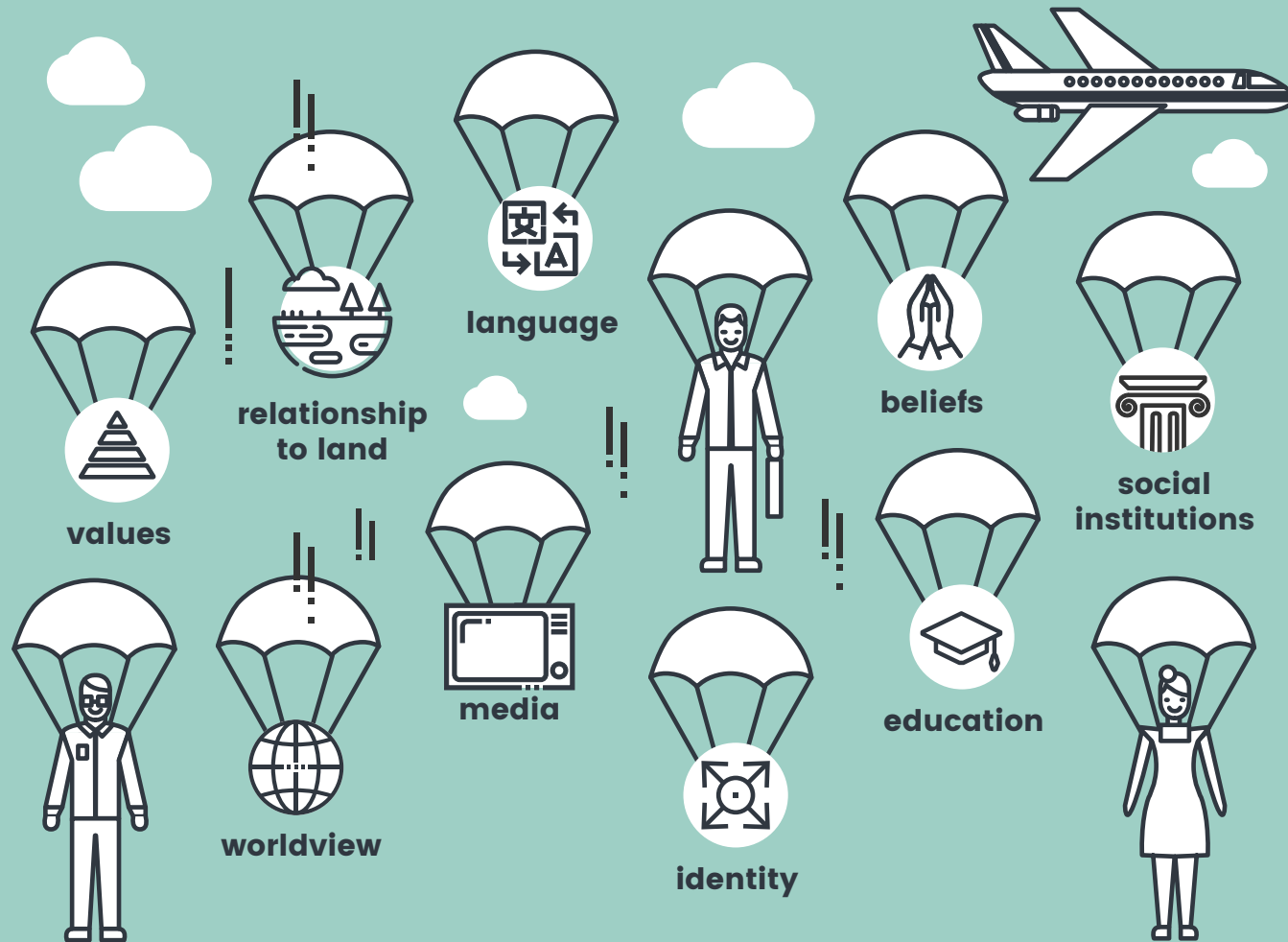4   Imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge.[12]

While the concepts of imperialism and **colonialism** are interconnected, the terms should not be seen as synonymous. Rather, it is generally agreed that colonialism is but one expression of imperialism, "a particular realisation of the imperial imagination".[12]

▷ *Click here to watch the video: What is imperialism?*

Imperialism can be defined as a policy of extending a country's power or influence through colonisation, military force, economic control, or other means[13]. It is these 'other means', which are the primary concern of this unit, and arguably which constitute the primary manifestation of imperialism in the contemporary world. These 'other means' of extending a country's power or influence are commonly captured by the concept of **cultural imperialism**.

As its name suggests, cultural imperialism refers to the cultural aspects of imperialism. To attempt to define cultural imperialism would require a broadly accepted view of both culture and imperialism. Yet as we know from the previous unit, a full appreciation of the complex, dynamic, and nuanced nature of culture defies a simple or uncontroversial definition. In its broadest sense, the concept of cultural imperialism "seems to mean that the process of imperialist control is aided and abetted by importing supportive forms of culture".[14] This can include the transmission of ideas and ways of thinking from one culture to another, when this transmission has the effect of privileging a dominant cultural perspective. This is not limited to the human service or helping professions but can also include the environmental movement, business and science based professions.

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values

relationship to land

language

beliefs

social institutions

worldview

media

identity

education

Many academics across the globe have expressed concern about the forces of **cultural imperialism** in international professional work.[15, 16, 17, 18] For example, social work writers have been raising awareness of the problematic dominance of **Western** influences, stressing the need for social work to free itself from the in-built assumptions and cultural biases of Western theories and models of practice.[15] There is concern that Western ideas of social work, such as a focus on individual needs and the priority afforded scientific evidence, are exported to other settings and cultural contexts, and can create a form of cultural imperialism.

Similarly, within the environmental management discipline, green grabbing or "resource **alienation** in the name of the environment"[19] is another form of imperialism. Alienation of people from their land can occur through complete removal of access or the introduction of new rules around access (such as notions of land ownership) and management of resources. Local people are sometimes constructed as outdated environmental destructors who require correction by 'modern' scientific techniques. In these cases, environmental imperialism is combined with power and privilege to justify sacrifices of the livelihood of 'the few', usually impoverished communities, for the perceived benefit of global society.

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At times, the contradictions of imperialism are difficult to identify and, in a sense, require us to hold a mirror to our own cultural practices. Read this article by **Janice Boddy** which highlights the irony of Western campaigns to abolish the practice of female genital cutting in Africa that have occurred at the same time as increasing demand for labiaplasty in the US and UK. Boddy argues that these practices "vividly expose the similarities between "us" and African "others".[20]

Refer back to our earlier module on culture. How might emic approaches help us to hold up a mirror to our own cultural practices, to see the similarities between ourselves and 'others' and to challenge ideas of the superiority of the external 'expert'? What might some processes to develop more collaborative understandings look like?

Entrenched notions that Western ideology and practices are superior continue to reign across the globe.[18] The exportation of Western knowledge, values and beliefs can be seen to help to sustain **hegemony** and control.[15, 18, 21] This issue will be re-visited and explored further in Module 5. For now, it is sufficient to stress that the concept of **cultural imperialism** is usually used as a negative, pejorative term across various disciplines and endeavours. As you can imagine, if one culture or cultural perspective is privileged above others this can

lead to the diminishing and devaluing of other cultures. Therefore, one of the key reasons frequently suggested for opposing any form of cultural imperialism is that of the preservation of cultural diversity.

WHY PRESERVE CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

Cultural diversity has always been a distinctive feature of most societies worldwide. Political systems and movements of various persuasions and forms have often tried to deny this. This was most notable in the 19th and 20th centuries where exploitative and oppressive imperialist policies and practices permeated the globe, particularly in the form of Western political and economic domination in so-called 'developing' countries.

UNESCO suggests that cultural diversity should be defined "as the capacity to maintain the dynamic of change in all of us, whether individuals or groups".[6] Diversity is one of the core concepts of intercultural learning. This concept recognises that cultural difference, or diversity, is valuable and worthy of protection.

Click here to watch the video: Cultural Diversity

Valuing diversity promotes an inclusive society, with a vision of providing all inhabitants, regardless of differences, with opportunities to participate and form their lives on an equal footing based on the universally

shared principles of our common humanity.[5] Inclusion is important not only across communities but within communities where diversity will also exist.[11] Promotion of cultural diversity is a universal human right.[6]

As you become increasingly familiar with the concept of imperialism, particularly cultural imperialism, you may begin to see evidence of it in many places around you. The privileging of one culture over another and the increasing dominance of one set of cultural features and beliefs over others has been identified as one of the features of modern **globalisation**. We need to become conscious of this dynamic and begin to adopt a critically aware approach to thinking about our own role in this process.

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REFLECTION TASK

Option 1:

Consider the various components of your own culture as identified in the previous unit. Does your culture diminish or promote the preservation of **cultural diversity**? If so, how? Does your culture implicitly or explicitly endorse or reject the supremacy of Western values, beliefs, and worldviews?

Option 2:

Watch this video by **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** about the danger of a single story. How do single stories about culture emerge and persist? What is the danger of a single story? Chimamanda herself notes that she has also fallen into the trap of reducing other cultures to a single story. Note down your perceptions of other cultures and observe if you have any tendencies to generalise and reduce perceptions of others to a single story.

Option 3:

Consider your vision for future practice in your chosen field of study (either in Australia or elsewhere). Does this vision of practice diminish or promote the preservation of cultural diversity? If so, how? Does this vision implicitly or explicitly endorse or reject the supremacy of Western values, beliefs, and worldviews?

Discuss your responses with your lecturer, fellow students, friends or family

Further your engagement with the topic of imperialism and cultural diversity by referring to the Learning Resources page.

Click here to go to the Learning Resources page

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MODULE 3

Racism & Privilege

Learning goal: To develop a critical appreciation of the multiple ways in which racism and privilege impact upon individuals' life experiences and choices.

▷ *Click here to watch the video:*
Racism and privilege

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White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.[22]

It is difficult to travel very far along the path of cultural understanding, and in particular an understanding of cultural difference, without running up against the issues of racism and privilege. A significant challenge in understanding the nature and impact of racism and privilege is being open to examining our own experience of these issues. In this unit, we'll explore the ways in which racism and privilege impact upon individuals' life choices and experiences, the contentious concepts of 'race' and racism, and the interconnected concepts of power and privilege.

RACISM AND LIFE CHOICES

Our previous unit discussed the processes of imperialism and colonisation, which enabled European countries to expand their rule. A key consequence is the ongoing destruction of people's ways of life, or in its most extreme form, **cultural genocide**.

Alongside these imperialist ventures, racialisation also ensued, where colonised peoples were positioned as inferior. This process was extended across the planet and became embedded in countries colonised by Europeans, resulting in a redistribution of world resources through the politicisation of biological attributes. In other words, racist beliefs were used to justify the exercise of power in many areas of life, producing dramatic negative economic and social impacts for many peoples around the world. The ideology of racism continues to permeate various contemporary socio-economic and cultural contexts across the globe.[17, 23]

As emphasised in the first two units, how we conceptualise and thus understand concepts and words matter:

Words indicate understandings of reality, shape interactions within discourses that produce them, and expose specific conceptualisations of power relations and people's place in the world. They also influence actions taken. [Therefore] questioning words and meanings is more than arguing about semantics.[23]

For example, the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination defines racial discrimination as:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.[24]

Although the above definition is clearly valuable in placing racism within the context of Human Rights, it nonetheless "suffers from the traditional assumption that race is something that exists and has a scientific basis", a point worthy of further consideration.[25]

'Race' and 'racism' are contentious concepts that are often used interchangeably. It is indeed indisputable that all human beings belong to the same race – Homo sapiens. Yet historically, the meaning of race has varied. Early definitions focussed on a racialised hierarchy based on physical attributes, particularly skin colour. Later definitions focussed on allegedly different intelligence levels that favoured white skin. Unsurprisingly, this theory has since been thoroughly discredited. However, the misconception of race as a biological entity has recently acquired a new lease

of life through genetic biology and socio-biology. These disciplines seek to explain variations in human physicality and behaviour through genomes. But again, it is "the politicisation of this biologically based process ... that results in racism, whilst further exposing its socially constructed basis".[23]

Racism is a set of economic, political and ideological practices whereby a dominant group exercises hegemony over subordinate groups.[26]

Racism is a reactionary concept "founded upon the scientifically false premises that there are physical and psychological inequalities between human races, and that the social and cultural history of mankind is dependent upon these racial distinctions".[27] The way in which this reaction can emerge may be through more overt expressions of discrimination or exclusion, however, new forms of racism can be taken for granted in aspects of daily life. For example, racism can appear in the form of a narrow construction of Australian identity or way of life, that excludes minority groups.[28] Racism may also be expressed through institutional or systemic discrimination, yet these forms continue to "impact strongly on the life chances of individuals who are not part of the mainstream".[25] As these forms of racism are more difficult to prove and identify, covert racism remains a pervasive part of our society.[29]

▷ *Click here to watch the video: Hidden forms of racism*

Racism has three inter-related and interactive components that are embedded in, and negotiated through the minutiae of everyday life: personal; institutional; and cultural.[23] Critical race theorists add an equally important structural dimension to our

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understanding of racism: that racism interacts and intersects with other forms of oppression, such as classism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism.[30]

Key point

The dynamic of racism, whereby individuals and groups of people are discriminated against and subjugated on the basis of perceived physical characteristics such as skin colour, has been a pervasive and destructive force in many human societies. Dominant groups have claimed, either explicitly or implicitly, superiority over others on the basis of race and acted upon these claims in discriminatory and destructive ways. Racism has therefore had a significant impact on the lives and experiences of many individuals and groups around the world. This means that a critical understanding of culture and cultural difference must include recognising and understanding both the nature of racism and its consequences.

To address or minimise the effects of racism, all forms of hidden racism need to be made visible, including the intersecting and largely invisible structural forces that confer power and privilege to dominant groups. That is, those who have access to resources and power beyond the common advantages of marginalised citizens.[31, 32, 33] However, "most privilege is not recognised as such".[31] In fact, "one of the functions of privilege is to structure the world so that privileges are invisible – in the sense

that they are unexamined – to those who benefit from them".[34] This video by Sacha Norrie highlights some of the aspects of privilege that can remain invisible.

▶ *Click here to watch the video: "Invisible Privilege" by Sacha Norrie*

SKIN COLOUR

Skin colour is one of the more disturbing, largely unexamined, and persistent social constructs that perpetuates discrimination and divides power. As Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson points out "whiteness as a racial identity … confers dominance and privilege [that] remains unmarked and unnamed".[35] For Moreton-Robinson, the category of race subsumes all other sources of social division, including gender.[36] Indeed, in most Western societies, whiteness is a default standard against which all other groups of colour are compared, contrasted and made visible.[33]

▶ *Click here to watch the video: Black and white*

Whiteness would not be so problematic if it were not predicated on white supremacy, imposed overtly and covertly on racialised minorities, and made invisible to those who benefit from its existence.[33] Whiteness "is both personal and political".[36] In white majority nations such as Australia the universality of whiteness allows it to mask its privileged position. It has thus been argued that white privilege should be the object of inquiry in understanding race relations.[37]

'...most of the time, I forget what skin colour I hold and the skin colour of others. The only time I am reminded is when someone asks me, "Where are you from?" My mind, always thinks of the funny reply, "I come from my mother's womb"!, but I never say this. Then it hits me like a brick, I am perceived as being "other". Socially, in my younger days, on reflection, I see that I tried so hard to fit in, and was swept along in the current of the dominant river. These days, I am reminded, of the Eurocentric world I live in, when I put the television on and when I walk into a shopping centre.' - Dhammika Pererira-Marland

▶ *Click here to watch the video: The beauty of human skin in every color*

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For those of us who come from a privileged racial background, unpacking what it means to be white can prove a challenging and confronting task. US research found that the question 'What does it mean to be white?' was very challenging for white Euro-Americans – the question simply did not make sense. Interviewing in downtown San Francisco, researchers found that the most common response to this question was to ask if it was a trick. Incredulity was usually followed by a declaration that this was not something they ever think about.[36]

Effective change lies in making whiteness visible, by exploring it as a racial or cultural construct, and defining whiteness in a non-defensive and non-racist manner. In order to do this:

White society must be willing to look at themselves honestly, to confront the truth about themselves and the world, and to liberate themselves from the invisible cultural conditioning of a racialised society.[33]

Part of confronting this truth is to engage with the broader context in which your international experience is taking place by learning about the relationship between local actions and global issues.[38, 39] Teju Cole has highlighted that the international endeavours of white society to 'help' others, known as the White Saviour Industrial Complex can be "a big emotional experience that validates privilege" while lacking attention to the contextual conditions that create poverty and inequality.[40] This **speech** by Ivan Illich in 1968 elaborates this point further and provides some confronting perspectives on the idea of helping or notions of white superiority, particularly when matched with ignorance of the broader political, social and economic relationships between countries.

Engaging with issues of racism and privilege can be very challenging – both intellectually and personally. This is, however, an important challenge if our goal is to develop an inclusive and critical understanding of culture. In Module 1 we were encouraged to recognise that culture was multidimensional and complex and to reject simplistic definitions and reductionist ways of thinking about it. Any such complex understanding of culture must consider the impact of racism because of the pervasive impact that this dynamic has had on individuals, groups and indeed societies around the globe. A critically reflective approach to such an understanding will involve thinking about these issues not just as abstract concepts but also as they manifest in our own lives. For some this may mean reflecting on the experience of racism themselves, while for others it will involve recognising and understanding the often-invisible experience of privilege.

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REFLECTION TASK

For those of us who come from privileged racial backgrounds, one means by which we can begin to unpack what it means to be white is to understand ourselves as racial beings. This requires us to learn from the experiences of those who do not share the same racial privilege.

What does it mean to be white?

For some ideas about what it means to be white, read this list by **Peggy McIntosh** on the daily effects of white privilege.

Write a brief response, using the following questions as a guide:

Q1   Have you ever been denied access to educational opportunities because of the colour of your skin?

Q2   Have you ever been denied access to social and economic opportunities because of the colour of your skin?

Q3   Have you ever felt discouraged from considering certain career paths because of the colour of your skin?

OR

A class divided – Jane Elliott

In the 1970s, primary school teacher Jane Elliott devised an exercise for her pupils with the aim of learning about racism and discrimination. The exercise is known as Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes. This recording shows Ms Elliott conducting the exercise with her students, and then later a similar exercise with adults.

*Click here to watch the video:
A class divided*

Q1   How do the experiences of the school children highlight the way that racism can impact in multiple dimensions?

Q2   How does this experiment demonstrate the importance of reflecting on 'whiteness', racialisation and the daily, taken for granted forms of racism experienced by marginalised groups?

Discuss with your lecturer, fellow students, family or friends.

Further your engagement with the topic of racism and privilege by referring to the Learning Resources page.

*Click here to go to the
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MODULE 4

Critical Reflection & Culture

Learning goal: To understand the role of critical reflection in making explicit aspects of an individual's cultural self, and to articulate how culture shapes values, beliefs and worldviews.

▶ *Click here to watch the video: Critical reflection*

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*You can't really know the 'self' fully until you have engaged in **critical reflection**.[41]*

The previous unit suggested that an understanding of racism and privilege required going beyond abstract, conceptual knowledge about these issues. A critical understanding involves reflection on our own situations and experiences, connecting these to the broader concepts and dynamics under consideration. This is also true for our broader goal of intercultural learning. Intercultural awareness "is not about a passive absorption of cultural knowledge" which one then applies in intercultural interactions; rather, it requires ongoing self-examination and critical reflection about key aspects of one's cultural self.[42] A critically reflective framework helps to make explicit the ways in which culture shapes our values, beliefs, and worldviews. We'll explore this further in this module.
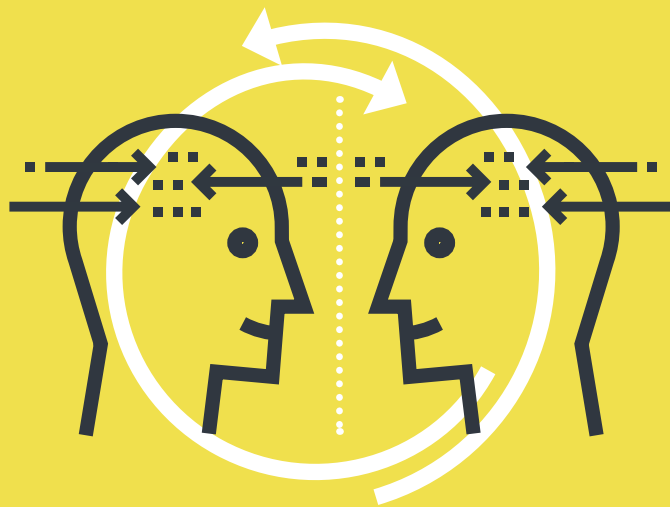
intercultural awareness 'is not about a passive absorption of cultural knowledge' which one then applies in intercultural interactions; rather, it requires ongoing self-examination and critical reflection about key aspects of one's cultural 'self.'[42]

Click here to watch the video:
Why is critical reflection important?

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Through your participation in the reflective exercises of the previous units you have already begun to explore your capacity to critically reflect upon key aspects of your culture, and cultural self. The aim of this unit is to consolidate that learning. In so doing, we examine (or for many of you, re-examine) the concept of critical reflection. In particular, we explore its usefulness as a conceptual and theoretical tool that helps make explicit aspects of one's cultural self.

The importance of critical reflection in intercultural interactions cannot be over-stated. Without a reflective awareness of our own cultural selves, we risk reproducing the very dynamics that have been discussed in this eBook so far – cultural reductionism, imperialism and racism. **Cultural awareness** involves not simply knowing something of the nature of culture, or learning about the culture of others, it involves developing a deep and critical awareness of our own cultural selves and our position in relation to issues such as cultural imperialism and racism. Central to the process of excavating the elements that make up our cultural self is the development of a critically reflective framework. Learning to navigate cultural differences with openness, awareness and respect requires explicit acknowledgement of one's cultural self, by "making the 'invisible' visible"[43] or exploring those aspects that are not known to our self or others.

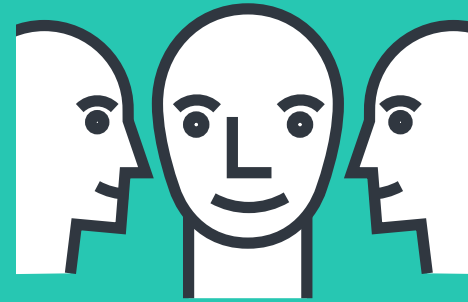One of the key writers on critical reflection, Jan Fook defines critical reflection as:

... a transformative process based upon a theoretical framework whereby one engages in a process of understanding how power and domination come into practice. This process includes an analysis of structural factors such as class, 'race', and gender. It includes also an analysis of cultural factors, such as beliefs and behaviours. These insights are then reflexively linked to one's understanding based upon their experiences.[41]
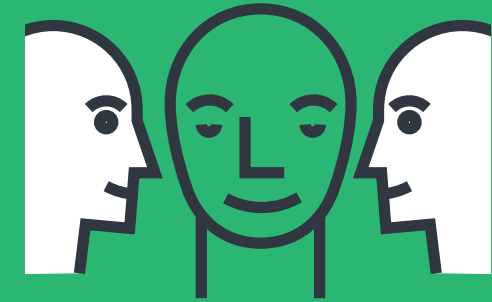
known to self

not known to self

known to others

ARENA

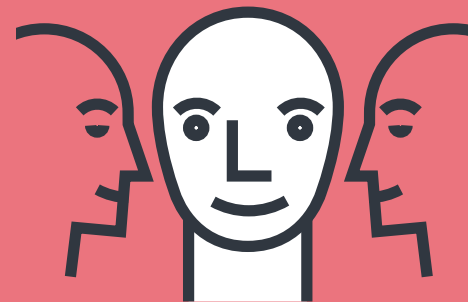BLIND SPOT

not known to others

FAÇADE

UNKNOWN

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There are four aspects to critical reflection: selecting a topic or event to reflect on; deciding on who you will reflect with, yourself or a group; working through a series of reflection steps; and making use of a range of reflection skills and strategies.[41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48]

Reflection on

• Critical incidents
• Theory and practice

Reflecting with

• Individual reflection (journaling)
• Discuss, learn from & support peers
• A learning partner – teaching staff, clients or community members – sharing the position of being a learner with others

Reflection steps

• Describe
• Interpret
• Verify
• Explain
• Reconstruct

Reflection skills and strategies

• Create a safe space
• Active listening
• Reflecting back and checking understanding
• Reserving judgement or evaluation of thoughts or others
• Putting yourself in others' shoes
• Being aware of power differences
• Practising humility

Reflection on

The first aspect is to identify the topic, feelings or events that will form the focus for your reflection. This may be a critical incident that has occurred that disrupted or made you re-think your professional assumptions. Alternatively, you may be encountering a mismatch between the theory you have been learning during your course and the application of that theory in practice. These differences can particularly arise in resource-poor settings. The first aspect therefore is to identify the topic or event that will form the subject of your critical reflection.

Reflecting with

Reflection can occur in formal or informal settings. You may choose to integrate reflection as part of your daily life through conversations or journaling, or through more formal group experiences with your peers, teaching staff or community members. In practice, a mix of these options can be beneficial. Individual reflection can have the advantage of time, space and privacy of thoughts; however, learning about the reactions of others to a similar experience can often assist with unearthing our own cultural assumptions.

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REFLECTION STEPS

Critical reflection steps can involve two stages:

1. Deconstructing or unearthing deep assumptions through the process of reflection by describing, interpreting, verifying and explaining your topic or event.[44, 49]

2. Putting it back together, or reconstructing, to realise how such insights can influence or transform one's practice.[41]

The reflection steps listed here represent the **DIVER** (Describe, Interpret, Verify, Explain, Reconstruct) approach to reflection.

The critical reflection worksheet will help you work through these steps.

Click here to go to the critical reflection worksheet

Describe by listening, observing and remaining open to a situation, holding off on judgement or evaluation. This step involves describing in detail your critical incident, feeling or differences noticed between theory and reality. Try to be as descriptive and non-judgemental as possible, describe what you saw and what you heard.
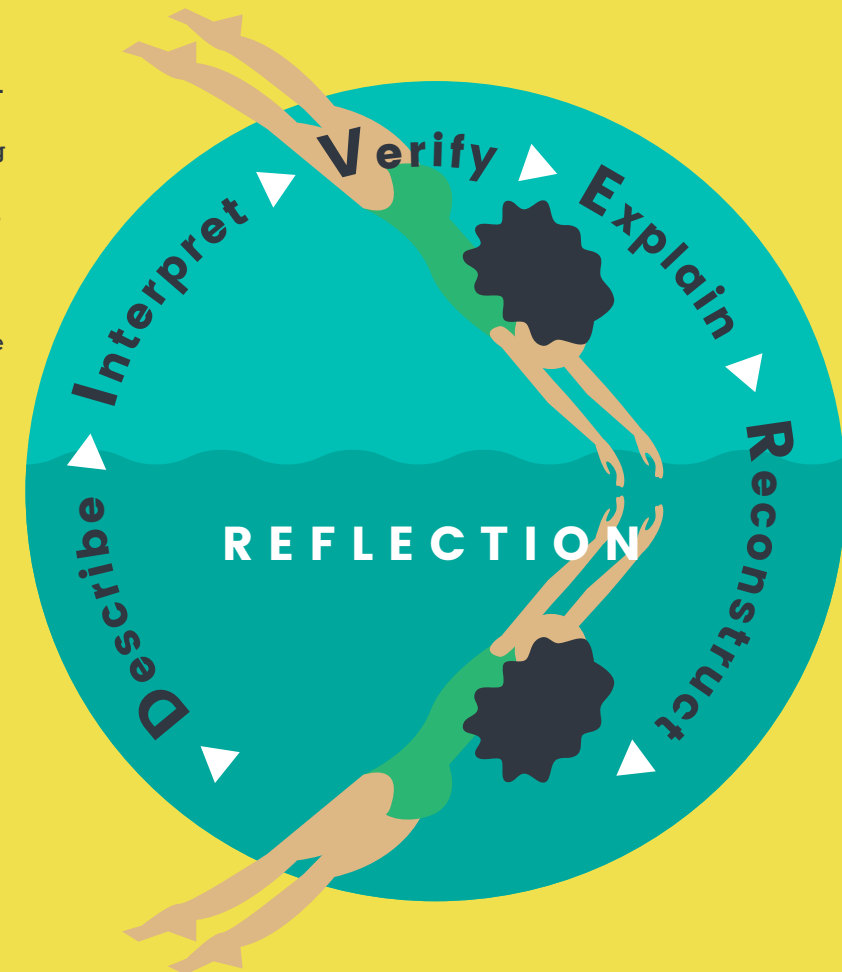
Interpret your description by writing or discussing what you thought about the incident. Think of two or three alternative ways your description could be interpreted. Try and put yourself in other people's shoes and think about the interpretation that they might offer, what might they notice in your description or how might they react. What does your description reveal about what is important to you and what aspects you tend to pay less attention to?

Verify by acknowledging that your own and other cultures are dynamic and therefore your understanding of other cultures needs to be constantly checked through collaborative learning practices. Test your

interpretations, ask host staff or students or other local community members further questions to explore your assumptions and interpretations.

Explain your new understanding of the incident, by connecting your interpretation with theories and concepts that you have explored in this intercultural learning module. What words have you used and what do these indicate about your perspective of the experience? What assumptions have you noticed in your original description and where might they have come from? What does your description reveal about your values, beliefs or awareness of power? What does this tell you about your cultural-self and others' cultural practices?

Reconstruct by putting these steps back together. What does this mean for yourself and your future professional practice? What might you do differently in the future? What new understandings about yourself and others do you bring to a situation?

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REFLECTION SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Reflective processes require honesty and can create a degree of discomfort. Group reflective exercises in particular require a safe space for everyone to share thoughts, ideas and experiences without fear of judgement. This requires all participants to respect confidentiality and to maintain attitudes of curiosity without judgement, removing competition and communicating with respect. The same attitudes can be applied in individual self-reflection; this is not a time to be overly critical, but rather to adopt an open attitude of learning about self. The skills that assist with creating safe environments include active and reflective listening, reserving judgement, seeking to understand other points of view, believing that others are acting with good intent, being aware of power and practising humility.

Active listening can be hampered by bad habits such as mind-wandering, multi-tasking or thinking ahead.[50]

Read one of the following articles that highlights the barriers to active listening:

Read these articles by **Esther Goh** or **Kathryn Robertson** that highlight the barriers to active listening.

Q1   What obstacles prevent you from listening actively?

Q2   What strategies could you use to notice when your mind is wandering, multi-tasking, judging, avoiding or thinking ahead instead of listening actively during your interactions with others?

Discuss your responses with your lecturer, fellow students, friends or family.

Using the critical reflection worksheet write or draw an outline of your own critically reflective framework that you can use as a guide for your forthcoming international learning experience.

Click here to go to the critical reflection worksheet

Further your engagement with the topic of critical reflection and culture by referring to the Learning Resources page.

Click here to go to the Learning Resources section

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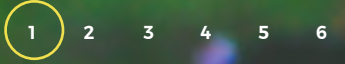
MODULE 5

Intercultural Practice

Learning goal: To develop an understanding of some of the knowledge, values, and skills required when working across cultures.

▶ *Click here to watch the video: Intercultural practice*

So far we have built our foundations to cultural learning by exploring a number of issues including culture, imperialism, cultural diversity, racism and privilege. We also explored critically reflective approaches to cultural learning. This final unit introduces some of the knowledge, values, and skills required when working across cultures.

Click here to watch the video: Developing skills for professional practice

As we discussed in Module One, the idea of **cultural competence** is problematic and focusses on what people do rather than knowledge, skills and attitudes.[29]

While we can learn from the situations of individual cultural groups, we risk 'an arrogance of knowing' if we think we can apply or transfer that 'knowing' to all cross-cultural situations.[43]

The purpose of these modules is to encourage consideration of the ongoing development and eventual application of the foundational knowledge you have gained in the module thus far:

Interculturality is an ongoing discovery, a perpetual wondering, the recognition that the 'other' is not a void to be filled but a plenitude to be discovered. When we start to think we have developed intercultural competencies, it is very likely that we have in fact started to close ourselves off from what is actually going on....[6]

As noted in the second module on imperialism and cultural diversity, professional practice in the international domain must "not become an exercise in cultural imperialism".[15] These arguments have been made across a range of disciplines, including social work, medicine, physiotherapy, nursing, occupational therapy, education, psychology and anthropology.* The process of repositioning international work requires a certain criticality about the assumptions underpinning the Western knowledge base upon which the profession has been built.[16, 51, 52] It is important to avoid reinforcing notions of the superiority of Western models of practice that so often prove inappropriate in many non-Western cultures and to be able to recognise that professional practice will take alternative forms in different contexts, due to different worldviews, culture and socio-economic environments.[36, 53, 54]

This is not a simple matter of determining that all knowledge from the West is 'bad' and all indigenous or Eastern knowledge is 'good' but rather it is about awareness of your own cultural lens and openness to alternative ways of knowing, seeing and being in the world.[55] Perhaps you could aim to become an observer of your own profession and appreciate that Western models of practice offer "but a single lens through which to view the world".[50] Cultivating awareness of your own Western assumptions takes practice and even practitioners with substantial international experience must continually work at questioning their assumptions, as culture is an embedded and taken for granted part of our daily lives.[56]

** See **Learning Resources Section** for cross disciplinary example.*

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Behavioral

Communication
Community development including conflict resolution
Anti racist practice
Organisational practice

KNOWLEDGE
Cognitive

Historical context and issues of power
One's own culture
The other culture/s
Intercultural dynamics

ATTITUDE
Affective

Learning
Celebration
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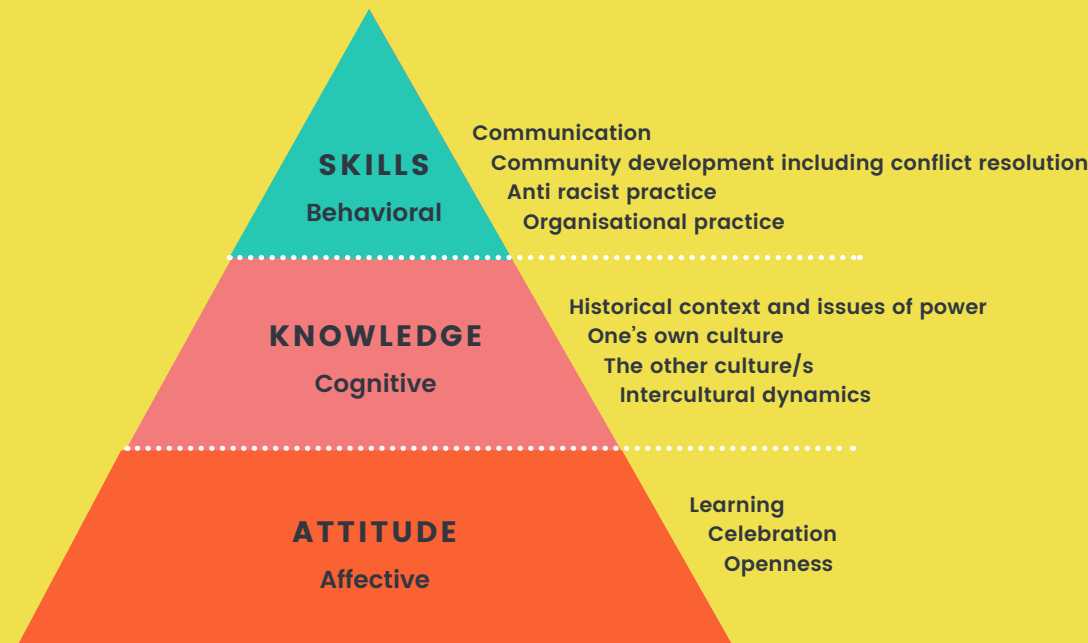Critical Reflection & Culture

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Our earlier module on reflective practice offers one means of becoming more aware of your own cultural bias, and reflection is an important ongoing practice in many professions. Other strategies include cultivating an attitude of "curiosity ahead of judgement" and recognising one's own intercultural incompetence.[57] This attitude comes from the practice of **cultural relativism**, where

One should try to judge and interpret the behaviour of others in terms of their traditions and experience. This does not mean that one should not make judgements; it simply means that one should suspend judgement while engaged with aspects of that particular culture.[58]

This requires practitioners to cultivate the skills to suspend judgement, tolerate ambiguity, understand that there will be multiple truths and have a critical awareness of how and by whom knowledge is created.[44] Further to this, it is important to "consider every culture a dynamic culture and every interaction a dynamic interaction… as a collaborative partnership based on power-sharing".[29] These sentiments are echoed in the concept of cultural humility which requires "a change in overall perspective and way of life…[to] be aware of power imbalances and being humble in every interaction with every individual" by exercising the attributes of openness, self-awareness, egoless, supportive interaction and self-reflection and critique.[47]

Click here to watch the video:
Suspending Judgement

Click here to watch the video:
Strategies for Suspending Judgement

open to alternative ways of knowing, being in and seeing the world

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

reflective practice

awareness of cultural self

LIFE LONG LEARNING

awareness of imperialism, racism, diversity, privilege and power informs practice

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YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE: EXPECT UNCERTAINTY

For students embarking on an international experience, it is common to feel a desire to contribute or make a difference for their host community. However, it is important to recognise that on arrival in a new environment, there will be differences to encounter and much to learn. It can be helpful to think through the following four stages prior to being able to make a contribution that your host community would consider worthwhile. Four stages that students should consider during an international experience are: recognising, encountering, adapting and mastering.[59] That is you should first seek to **recognise** your cultural self; develop awareness of cultural bias and any ethnocentric tendencies; **encounter** by going, doing, seeing and observing; and **adapt** by adjusting to or negotiating new behaviour required in different environments. Finally, **mastering** is not intended as an expectation that you will master intercultural skills, but rather master the confidence to navigate yourself in your new environment. These stages are highlighted here to remind you to question your intentions or expectations around your international experience and that it will take time to adjust and adapt to new environments.

While these preparation modules will cultivate your openness to new experiences and develop your critical lens, it is also important to recognise that you can never be fully prepared for an international experience and that experiences frequently do not match expectations.[60, 61, 62] Take care to balance any perceived need to complete something meaningful or to contribute to your host community, and instead check in with hosts about their interests and priorities.[63] Experiences of culture shock are common for students, and practical concerns such as a fear of not making friends, language barriers or worries from home can impact on your ability to engage in higher level intercultural learning.[64] It can be helpful to view every interaction as an intercultural learning opportunity. These students offer some advice on dealing with some of the practical concerns of embarking on an international experience.

▷ *Click here to watch the video: Prepare to be open*

▷ *Click here to watch the video: Expect uncertainty*

As this module highlights, effective intercultural practice is complex and requires awareness of your attitudes, values, knowledge and skills. The issues that have been discussed in this intercultural learning eBook represent some of the foundational knowledge and essential approaches that are required for such effective practice. Engaging with this material should, however, be considered a starting point in developing cultural awareness rather than the achievement of such a goal. Intercultural learning should be considered a lifelong learning exercise, and one that requires an ongoing commitment to grappling with these challenging concepts, being open to new ideas and experiences, and engaging in critical reflection about our own cultural selves.

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REFLECTION TASK

Samantha Webhi asserts that unpacking motivations for participating in an intercultural exchange can assist with identifying any pre-conceived ethnocentric or colonising tendencies. For example, a fascination with other cultures may indicate a tendency to voyeurism and imperialism; 'liking' people from another country could mask assumptions of homogeneity; a perception that it is easier to 'make a difference' in an international rather than a local setting needs to be challenged; and the desire to 'give back' may indicate a lack of awareness of power relations and the potential for reinforcing oppression.[65]

Read this article by **Samantha Webhi**, that deconstructs student motivations for undertaking an international experience and reflect on your own motivations. Note down your expectations and learning goals for your international experience. Also note down some of your fears or concerns and what strategies might help to manage these? What assumptions might be underpinning your motivations, fears and expectations?

OR

Narayan Gopalkrishan encourages us to 'treat every interaction we have with people from a new culture as an opportunity to learn'. How might the use of your critically reflective framework assist in ensuring you learn from the richness of your intercultural encounters?

OR

Consider some of the stereotypes you may hold with respect to the culture with which you will soon be immersed in your forthcoming international experience. How might you use your critically reflective framework to ensure that you avoid enforcing these stereotypes?

LONG-TERM LEARNING EXERCISE

Recognising that intercultural-cultural learning is a life-long endeavour, it is important to consolidate your learning from your international experience and link this directly to aspects of your professional practice.

Review the professional standards for your discipline.

Q1   How does your professional body define intercultural practice?

Q2   Which skills, attitudes or values are required in your professional practice?

Q3   Which aspects of these modules resonate with you most, such that you would like to continue to incorporate them into your professional practice?

Write yourself a letter to address these questions and ask a close relative or friend to post this to you shortly after your return from your international experience. At this point, the letter will be a reminder to revisit your learning from your international experience and to not discard but move forward with your learning and incorporate your skills into your professional life.

Further your engagement with the topic of intercultural practice by referring to the Learning Resources page.
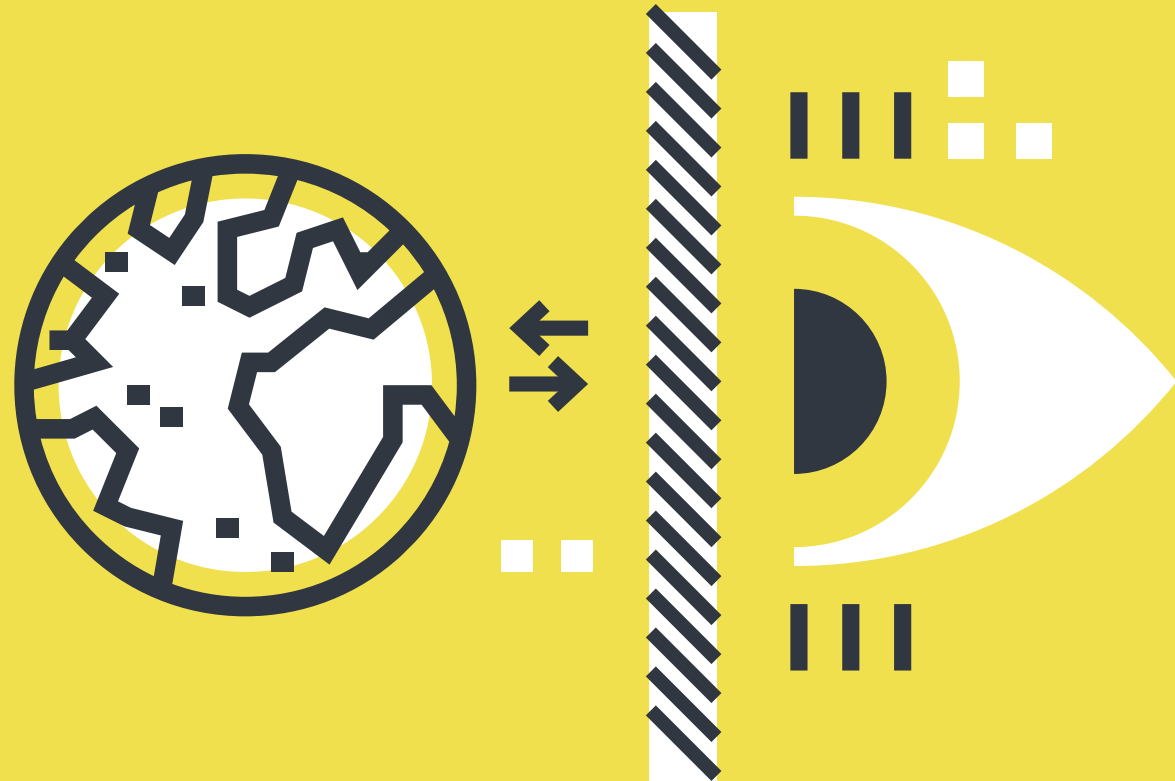
Click here to go to the Learning Resources section

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LOOKING FORWARD

Click here to watch the video:
Looking Forward

Intercultural learning is a lifelong process. The content you have covered in these modules is complex, challenging and at times, confronting. As you are now aware, the idea of becoming culturally competent represents an over-simplified understanding of intercultural learning. These modules are the starting point in developing your critical lens through which you can examine, reflect and extract deeper learning from your intercultural experiences. Maintaining a critical perspective that is informed by an awareness of your cultural self takes practice. We encourage you to keep working on the development of your critical lens, expect to make mistakes and reflect on your experiences. You will be able to apply these skills not only to your upcoming intercultural experience, but also throughout your personal and professional working life. Good luck and safe journey.

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Acculturation: 1) The degree to which an individual accepts and adheres to the majority dominant cultural values and their own cultural values.[66] 2) The process of adoption of culture between individuals or groups. Acculturation can be voluntary where agreement to adopt another's culture is mutual, or forced when one compels another to accept and participate in their culture.[16]

Active listening is a communication technique. To listen actively means to fully concentrate on what is being said rather than just passively hear the message of the speaker. It is engagement throughout the whole interview in a neutral and non-judgmental way. Listening and responding go hand in hand. Someone's listening can be distracted by other things around, by multi-tasking, or by thinking about other things at the same time, which then influence what has been remembered and actually understood.[67]

Alienation: The feeling or reality of exclusion, non-belonging and separateness.[16]

Colonialism: Refers to the event of an alien people invading the territory inhabited by people of a different race and culture, to establish political, social, spiritual, intellectual and economic domination over that territory and people. It includes territorial and resource appropriation by the coloniser and loss of

sovereignty by the colonised. The term also refers to a set of beliefs used to legitimate or promote this system, especially the belief that the mores of the coloniser are superior to those of the colonised.[16]

Critical consciousness: The ability to perceive social, political and economic oppression and to take action against the oppressive elements of society.[68]

Critical reflection: 1) A transformative process based upon a theoretical framework whereby one engages in a process of understanding how power and domination come into practice. Critical reflection is inclusive of both a structural analysis (such as class, gender, race etc), and cultural factors (such as values, beliefs, and behaviours)[69]; 2) An approach to analysing practice or experience, based on the identification of the assumptions embedded in that practice or experience. Part of the difficulty in being able to pin down the idea of critical reflection with any certainty possibly arises because critical reflection itself seems to derive from a number of different intellectual traditions. The main traditions from which critical reflection arises are: 1) reflective practice; 2) reflexivity; 3) postmodernism and deconstruction; and 4) critical social theory[49].

Cross-cultural practice: Practice where there is a diversity of traditions and intergenerational

issues, ideologies, beliefs and religions, and race and ethnicities. It can refer also to work acknowledging other diverse identities, such as sexual, political, professional and organisational.[70]

Cultural awareness: An understanding of a relevant cultural issue, not necessarily accompanied by a common or accepted practice or action.[66]

Cultural competence: 1) The ability to successfully form, foster and improve relationships with members of a culture different from one's own. It aims to avoid cultural blindness or the assumption that all people are the same. At the same time, it is important not to fall into the trap of believing that there are so many differences that we cannot understand or relate to other people at all. Cross-cultural competence is based on a commitment to actively seek information about different ways of doing things and applying and incorporating this information in practice. It is based on an understanding of the values, perceptions, social structure, norms mores, and verbal and non-verbal communication strategies of other cultures.[7] 2) Is the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognises, affirms, and values the worth of individuals,

families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.[71]

Cultural diversity: is above all, a fact: there exists a wide range of distinct cultures, even if the contours delimiting a particular culture prove more difficult to establish than might at first sight appear. It is related to the dynamic process whereby cultures change while remaining themselves, in a state of permanent openness to one another. At the individual level, this is reflected in multiple and changing cultural identities, which are not easily reducible to definite categories.[6]

Cultural genocide: Cultural genocide is a term used to describe the deliberate destruction of the cultural heritage of a people or nation for political, military, religious, ideological, ethnical, or racial reasons. Cultural genocide is the purposeful weakening and ultimate destruction of cultural values and practices. The United Nations discusses of genocide as violence committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". Many scholars consider this approach too narrow approach as it fails to acknowledge the full impacts of cultural destruction.[79]

Cultural imperialism: Refers to the cultural aspects of imperialism (see Imperialism below). Cultural Imperialism encompasses a

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range of broadly similar phenomena, and as such, it is difficult to define, but in its broadest sense, cultural imperialism refers to the process whereby imperialist control is aided and abetted by importing supportive forms of culture.[14]

Cultural 'self': Cultural awareness involves not simply knowing something of the nature of culture, or learning about the culture of others, it involves developing a deep and critical awareness of our own cultural selves and our position in relation to issues such as cultural imperialism and racism. Central to the process of excavating the elements that make up our cultural self is the development of a critically reflective framework.[41]

Culture: Is a system of beliefs, values and customs that are learned, shared, and transmitted through symbols.[66] Cultures continually evolve through internal processes and in contact with the environment and other cultures. Culture is the very substratum of all human activities, which derive their meaning and value from it.[6] Cultures are not monolithic structures that exert definable influences over people's values, beliefs and behaviours. Often influences are subtle, go unrecognised or exist as a composite of cultural and spiritual values drawn from a variety of sources.[42] Culture is an abstract concept that refers to learned and shared patterns of perceiving and adapting to the world.[4]

Culture shock: The stress, anxiety or discomfort a person feels when they are placed in an unfamiliar cultural environment, due to the loss of familiar meanings and cues relating to communication and behaviour.[66]

Emic and etic approaches: an emic approach, or from within, entails collaborative processes where both outsiders and insiders are changed by cultural interactions. An etic approach is top-down, an outsider point of view and understanding.[8, 72]

Ethnicity: A sense of group identification with beliefs, values and customs that are learned, shared and transmitted through symbols.[66] While 'race', ethnicity and nation are often used interchangeably, they are discrete. 'Race' tends to focus on physical attributes or phenotypes such as skin colour, ethnicity or origins associated with a specific cultural group, and nation with nationality within a nation-state.[23]

Ethnocentrism: A basic attitude expressing the belief that one's own ethnic group or one's own culture is superior to other ethnic groups or cultures, and that one's cultural standards can be applied in a universal manner.[73]

Ethnosphere: A term coined by anthropologist Wade Davis to refer to the sum total of all thoughts, dreams, myths, ideas, inspirations, and intuitions brought into being by the human imagination since the dawn of

consciousness. The ethnosphere is humanity's great legacy. It is a symbol of all that we are, and all that we can be.[10]

Eurocentricism: The view that many Europeans and their descendants have of themselves as being culturally and politically superior to all other peoples in the world.[16]

Globalisation is the ongoing process that is linking people, neighbourhoods, cities, regions and countries much more closely together than they have ever been before. This has resulted in our lives being intertwined with people in all parts of the world via the rapid distribution of the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the music we listen to, the information we get and the ideas we hold.[75]

Hegemony is leadership or dominance of one state or social group over another. Nowadays it is also used to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become common sense.[76]

Imperialism: 1) A total system of foreign power in which another culture, people, and way of life penetrate, transform and come to define the colonised society[16]; 2) A policy of extending a country's power or influence through colonisation, military force, economic control, or other means. The term 'imperialism' should not be confused with 'colonialism' as it often is. Imperialism operates from the

centre, it is a state policy, and is developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, whereas colonialism is nothing more than development for settlement or commercial intentions.[13]

Institutionalised racism: The ways in which racist beliefs or values have been built into the operations of social institutions in such a way to discriminate against, control and oppress various minority groups.[66]

Multiculturalism emphasises the need to respect and be sensitive to the cultures of different groups.[66]

Race is a highly contentious term that has shifted considerably over time. Scientifically, all human beings belong to the same race, yet historically the meaning of the term race has varied. It once focussed on a racialised hierarchy that encompassed the physical attributes of all 'races' – identified by skin colour and depicted in popular parlance as white, yellow, red and black. Definitions of 'race' racialised skin colour. Later, it focussed on allegedly different intelligence levels that favoured the white 'race'. 'Race' as a biological entity has acquired a new lease of life through genetic biology and socio-biology. These explain variations in human physicality and behaviour through genomes. Importantly, it is 'the politicisation of this biologically based process and through the negative evaluation of darker skin that results in racism, whilst

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further exposing its socially constructed basis'.[23] Given what we know about the capacity of humans to achieve and function within any culture, present-day inequalities between so-called 'racial' groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances.[77]

Racism: A set of economic, political and ideological practices whereby a dominant group exercises hegemony over subordinate groups.[26] The United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination[24] defines racial discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. Racism has three inter-related, interactive components that are embedded in and negotiated through the minutiae of everyday life: personal; institutional and cultural.[23]

Western refers to a way of thinking, a history of philosophy rooted in 'rational' thought where the individual subject is highly valued; where secular humanism prevails and the rational, autonomous, freely choosing

individual is highly valued; where democracy and freedom of choice is seen as the most just system promoting human rights and social justice – fairness and equality of opportunity; where neoliberal economics tend to dominate the social terrain and free market economics and free trade are seen as priorities; where the dominant history is that of exploration and conquest, of voyages of discovery in the interests of progress and the development of Western civilisations; and where social life is highly bureaucratised, impersonal and largely individualistic.[16]

White privilege is institutional rather than personal set of benefits for those who are, by race, having 'white skin'. Thus whiteness is a racial identity and in most Western societies it is a default standard against which all other groups of colour are compared, contrasted and made visible.[35]

Worldview is a way of seeing and understanding the world. It is a philosophy of life. It is a mental framework of ideas and attitudes about the world we live in, people around us, existing beliefs and ultimately ourselves in relation to it all. One's worldview is shaped by socio-economical, cultural, historical and contemporary happenings. One also acts accordingly to one's values and worldview.[78]

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Learning Resources

Intercultural learning is a life-long process. As our cultural viewpoint shapes our interpretation of events and information, we all need to continually work at developing awareness of our self and other worldviews. Further readings and resources are provided in this section to assist with this life-long learning journey.

These pages include further videos to watch, useful websites and articles to read so you can take your learning further. The critical reflection worksheet is included in this section and the external links to videos and articles referred to throughout the modules are provided here. If you find any links that are broken in the modules, try the full web addresses listed in these pages.

WELCOME

▷ Video links:

Welcome https://vimeo.com/251750515

What is intercultural learning? https://vimeo.com/251750628

▷ Further reading:

Jones, P., & Miles, D. (2017). Transformative learning in international student exchange: A critical perspective. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education, 19*(2), 47-60.

Jones, P., Rowe, S., & Miles, D. (2017). Beyond practical preparation: A critical approach to preparing social work students for international experiences. *International Social Work.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872817695390

MODULE ONE: CULTURE

▷ Video links:

Culture https://vimeo.com/250718736

What is culture? https://vimeo.com/250718899

Wade Davis: The worldwide web of belief and ritual (Ted Talk) http://www.ted.com/talks/wade_davis_on_the_worldwide_web_of_belief_and_ritual

What are emic and etic approaches? https://vimeo.com/250724018

Cultural competence https://vimeo.com/250724089

▷ Further viewing:

An Ecology of Mind: film by Nora Bateson http://www.anecologyofmind.com

⬿ Further reading:

Babacan, H., & Gopalkrishnan, N. (2004). Posttraumatic experiences of refugee women. In C.L. Rabin (Ed.), *Gender and culture in the helping process: Practitioners' narratives from global perspectives* (pp. 149-166). Sydney, Australia: Cengage Learning.

Fitzgerald, M., Mullavey-O'Byrne, C., & Clemson, L. (1997). Cultural issues from practice. *Australian Occupation Therapy Journal, 44,* 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1630.1997.tb00749.x

Gopalkrishnan, N. (2013). Culturally competent community development in a globalised world. *Samaja Karyada Hejjegalu, 3*(8), 44-63.

Gopalkrishnan, N., & Pulla, V. (2015). Beyond cultural competence: Working across cultures in a globalised world. In V. Pulla (Ed.), *The Lhotsampa people of Bhutan: Resilience and survival* (pp. 121-143). Hampshire, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. PMid:26392727 PMCid:PMC4558745

Gray, M., & Allegritti, I. (2003). Towards culturally sensitive social work practice: Re-examining cross-cultural social work. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk, 39*(4), 312-325.

Huber, J. (Ed.). (2012). *Intercultural competence for all: Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world.* Paris, France: Council of Europe Publishing.

Jahoda, G. (2012). Critical reflections on some recent definitions of 'culture'. *Culture and Psychology, 18*(3), 289-301. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X12446229

Kenny, S. (2011). *Developing communities for the future* (4th ed.). South Melbourne, Australia: Cengage.

Kleiman, A., & Benson, P. (2006). Anthropology in the clinic: The problem of cultural competency and how to fix it. *PLOS Medicine, 3*(10), 1673-1676.

Laird, E. S. (2008). Anti-oppressive social work: A guide for developing cultural competence. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Mattingly, M., Stuart, C., & VanderVen, K. (2002). Competencies for professional child and youth work practitioners. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work, 17*(1), 16-49.

Morris, J. (2008). In-between, across, and within difference: An examination of 'cultural competence. *International Journal of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, 1*(3/4), 315-325.

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Video links:

Imperialism https://vimeo.com/250724260

What is imperialism? https://vimeo.com/250724345

Cultural diversity https://vimeo.com/250724453

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story (TED talk) https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story#t-113351

Further viewing:

Wade Davis: Dreams from endangered cultures (TED talk) http://www.ted.com/talks/wade_davis_on_endangered_cultures.html

Useful websites:

UNESCO: Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

United Nations: World Day for Cultural Diversity, Dialogue and Development http://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/

Further reading:

Boddy, J. (2016). The normal and the aberrant in female genital cutting: Shifting paradigms. *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *6*(2), 41-69. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau6.2.008

Briskman, L. (2008). Decolonising social work in Australia: Prospect or illusion. In M. Gray, J. Coates, & D. Yellow Bird (Eds.), *Indigenous social work around the world: Toward culturally relevant education and practice* (pp. 83-93). Surrey, England: Ashgate.

Davis, W. (2009). T*he Wayfinders: Why ancient wisdom matters in the modern world*. Toronto, Canada: Anansi.

Gopalkrishnan, N. (2003). Cultural Diversity and Civic Participation in Queensland. Gold Coast, Australia: Centre for Multicultural and Community Development.

Gray, M. (2005). Dilemmas of international social work: Paradoxical processes in indigenisation, universalism and imperialism. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *14*(3), 231-238. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2005.00363.x

Gray, M., Coates, J., & Yellow Bird, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Indigenous social work around the world: Toward culturally relevant education and practice*. Surrey, England: Ashgate.

Gray, M., & Fook, J. (2004). The quest for a universal social work: Some issues and implications. *Social Work Education*, *23*(5), 625-644. https://doi.org/10.1080/0261547042000252334

Neuner, G. (2012). The Dimension of Intercultural Education. In J. Huber (Ed.), *Intercultural competence for all: Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world* (pp. 12-50). Paris, France: Council of Europe Publishing.

Razack, N. (2002). A critical examination of international student exchanges. *International Social Work*, *45*(2), 251-256. https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728020450020801

Razack, N. (2009). Decolonising the pedagogy and practice of international social work. *International Social Work*, *52*(1), 9-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872808097748

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London, England: Zed Books.

Tomlinson, J. (1991). *Cultural Imperialism*. London, England: Pinter Publishers.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). (2009). UNESCO World Report: Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Paris, France: UNESCO Publishing. ISBN: 978-92-3-104077-1.

Young, R. (1995). *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture, and race*. London, England: Routledge.

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MODULE THREE:
RACISM AND PRIVILEGE

Video links:

Racism and privilege https://vimeo.com/250725024

Hidden forms of racism https://vimeo.com/250725170

Sacha Norrie: Invisible privilege (Spoken Word) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdmdC2Ud9j0

Black and white https://vimeo.com/250725799

Angelica Dass: The beauty of human skin in every color (TED talk) https://www.ted.com/talks/angelica_dass_the_beauty_of_human_skin_in_every_color#t-622665

Reflection task materials:

McIntosh, P. (1988). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and Freedom Magazine*. July/August, 10-12. Excerpt from full article available at: https://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack

Allaboutcom. (2016, February 1st). Jane Elliott's Blue Eyes Brown Eyes[Video file]. Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/153858146

Useful websites:

All together now: erasing racism. Everyday Racism app. http://alltogethernow.org.au/everyday-racism/

Humanae skin colour project. http://humanae.tumblr.com

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx

Further reading:

Abrams, L. & Moio, J. (2009). Critical race theory and the cultural competence dilemma in social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education, 45*(2), 245-261.

Bailey, A. (1998). Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's oppression. *Journal of Social Philosophy, 29*(3), 104-119. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.1998.tb00124.x

Cheboksarov, N. (1980). Critical analysis of racism and colonialism. In United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Ed.), *Sociological theories: Race and colonialism* (pp. 347-382). Paris, France: UNESCO Publishing.

Cunneen, C. (2006). Racism, discrimination and the over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system: Some conceptual and explanatory issues. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice, 17*(1), 329-346. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2298241

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Dominelli, L. (2008). *Anti-racist social work* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave.

Gopalkrishnan, N. (2006). Anti-racist cultural competence: Challenges for human service organisations. In H. Babacan & N. Gopalkrishnan (Eds.) *The complexities of racism: Proceedings of the second international conference on "Racisms in the new world order".* Queensland, Australia: University of the Sunshine Coast.

Gopalkrishnan, N. (2014). Building resilient communities through culturally dynamic partnerships. *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice, 2*(6), 220-227.

Hall, S. (1980). Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance. In United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Ed.), *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (pp. 305-345). Paris, France: UNESCO Publishing.

McIntosh, P. (1988). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in Women's Studies. *Working Paper # 189*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley Centre for Research on Women.

Mills, C.W. (1999). *The racial contract*. New York, NY: Cornell University Press.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2000). *Talkin' up to the white woman: Indigenous women and feminism*. St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press.

Pease, B. (2007). Encouraging critical reflections on privilege in social work and the human services. *Practice Reflexions, 1*(1), 15-26.

Razack, N. (2002). A critical examination of international student exchanges. *International Social Work, 45*(2), 251-256. https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728020450020801

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Razack, N. (2009). Decolonising the pedagogy and practice of international social work. *International Social Work, 52*(1), 9-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872808097748

Ravenscroft, A. (2004). Anxieties of dispossession: Whiteness, history, and Australia's war in Viet Nam. In Moreton-Robinson, A. (Ed.), *Whitening race: Essays in social and cultural criticism* (pp. 3-16). Canberra, Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Reid, C. & Holland, W. (1996). Aboriginal rural education program: A case study in anti-racist strategies. In E. Vasta & S. Castles (Eds.) *The teeth are smiling: The persistence of racism in multicultural Australia* (pp. 113-129). St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Rizvi, F. (2009). Towards cosmopolitan learning. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 30*(3), 253–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300903036863

Sue, D. W. (2006). The invisible whiteness of being: Whiteness, white supremacy, white privilege, and racism. In M. G. Constantine & D. W. Sue (Eds.). *Addressing racism: Facilitating cultural competence in mental health and educational settings (pp. 15-30).* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

United Nations. (1965). International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. Retrieved from http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx

Walter, M., Taylor, S., & Habibis, D. (2013). Australian social work is white. In B. Bennett., S. Green., S. Gilbert., & D. Bessarab. (Eds.) *Our voices: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work* (pp. 230-244). Melbourne, Australia: Palgrave.

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MODULE FOUR: CRITICAL REFLECTION AND CULTURE

Video links:

Critical reflection https://vimeo.com/250727363

Why is critical reflection important? https://vimeo.com/250727434

Reflection task materials:

Goh, E. (2012). Integrating mindfulness and reflection in the teaching and learning of listening skills for undergraduate social work students in Singapore, *Social Work Education, 31*(5), 587-604. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02615479.2011.579094

Robertson, K. (2005). Active listening. More than just paying attention. *Australian Family Physician, 34*(12), 1053-1055. https://www.racgp.org.au/afpbackissues/2005/200512/200512robinson.pdf

Useful websites:

Critical Reflection: In conversation with Jan Fook (podcast) http://www.podsocs.com/podcast/critical-reflection/

Further reading:

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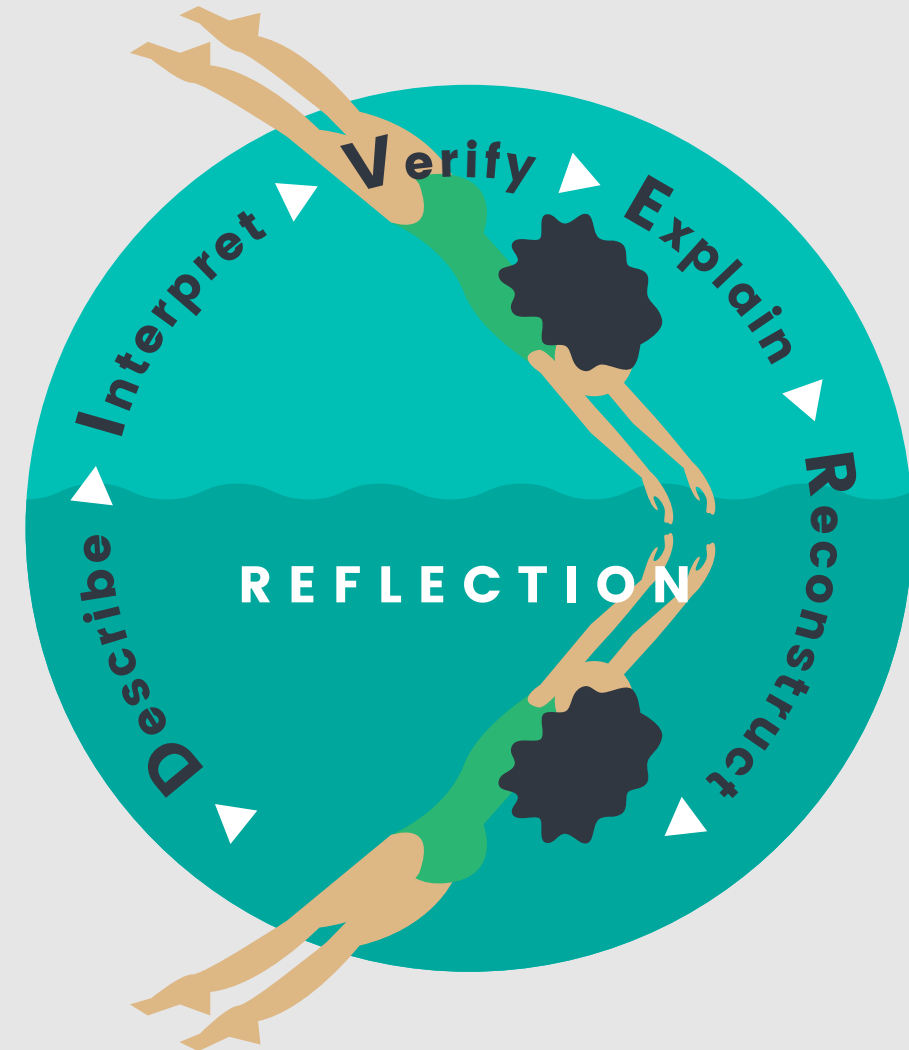
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Critical Reflection Worksheet

1. **Describe** in detail your critical incident, feeling or differences noticed between theory and reality.

2. **Interpret,** think of two or three alternative ways your description could be interpreted. Try and put yourself in other people's shoes and think about the interpretation that they might offer, what might they notice in your description or how might they react. What does your description reveal about what is important to you and what aspects you tend to pay less attention to?

3. **Verify** by testing your interpretations, ask host staff or students or other local community members further questions to explore your assumptions and interpretations.

4. **Explain** your new understanding of the incident, by connecting your interpretation with theories and concepts that you have explored in this intercultural learning module. What words have you used and what do these indicate about your perspective of the experience? What assumptions have you noticed in your original description and where might they have come from? What does your description reveal about your values, beliefs or awareness of power? What does this tell you about your cultural-self and other's cultural practices?

5. **Reconstruct** by putting these steps back together. What does this mean for yourself and your future professional practice? What might you do differently in the future? What new understandings about yourself and others do you bring to a situation?

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MODULE FIVE: INTER-CULTURAL PRACTICE

Video links:

Intercultural practice https://vimeo.com/250728489

Developing skills for professional practice https://vimeo.com/251575363

Suspending judgement https://vimeo.com/251576215

Strategies for suspending judgement https://vimeo.com/251576773

Prepare to be open https://vimeo.com/251576952

Expect uncertainty https://vimeo.com/251749321

Looking forward https://vimeo.com/251750372

Reflection task materials:

Webhi, S. (2009). Deconstructing motivations. Challenging international social work placements. International Social Work, 52(1), 48-59. Available at: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0020872808097750

Useful websites:

Centre for Cultural Competence Australia. http://ccca.com.au

Centre for Intercultural Learning. http://www.international.gc.ca/cil-cai/index.aspx?lang=eng

National Centre for Cultural Competence. https://nccc.georgetown.edu/

Unite for Site (Online Cultural Competencies Course) http://www.uniteforsight.org/cultural-competency/.

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