



**ADDRESSING THE STRENGTHS AND
COMPLEXITIES OF BICULTURAL YOUTH
AND FAMILY WORK – CONSULTATION
REPORT**

**Report on a consultation with
organisations employing bicultural
workers to engage refugee and
migrant young people and their
communities.**

Overview

For organisations working with refugee and migrant communities, employing bicultural or bilingual workers from the communities you are trying to engage can bring enormous benefits. Bicultural workers often bring valuable insights and a depth of cultural knowledge and experience, providing a 'bridge' between communities and services that can lead to better outcomes for clients (e.g. Corkery et al. 1997; Jackson et al. 2001). Diverse workforces have also been shown to provide fertile ground for innovation and creativity, particularly in a cross-cultural community services context (HREOC 1993).

However, there are complexities that bicultural youth and family workers face that workers who are not working with their own cultural communities are less likely to encounter. Sometimes these complexities are not acknowledged or are misunderstood within the workplace. Culturally-competent organisations need to reflect on the additional complexities of bicultural youth and family work practice, and how the organisation can best support workers in negotiating the sometimes-conflicting expectations of their workplace, the communities they are working with, and their own individual expectations.

The aim of this resource is to provide:

- A definition of bicultural youth and family work;
- Background context for organisations around the strengths and complexities of bicultural youth and family work practice; and
- Practical tips, strategies and examples of how community organisations can best support bicultural workers to negotiate the challenges of this type of work.

Consultation process

In developing this resource, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) conducted a review of related literature and research, interviewed managers from community organisations, and held a series of meetings to explore how community services can best support and strengthen bicultural youth and family work practice.

From 2005-09, three meetings were held with bicultural workers and three with managers to explore and document some of the issues, strengths and strategies for supporting good bicultural youth and family work practice.

This consultation has been funded through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Settlement Grants Program (SGP).

Defining a 'Bicultural Worker'

While the value of employing bicultural workers in the community services sector is broadly acknowledged, there has been little clarity to date about what defines a 'bicultural worker' and hence what skills or qualities these workers are bringing to their work with communities.

Bicultural or bilingual?

There has been some debate around the value and appropriateness of the term 'bicultural' and how a *bicultural worker* differs from a *bilingual worker*. The [Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health \(CEH\)](#) defines a bilingual worker as:

A person employed to use their language skills in English and another language with a linguistic proficiency in both languages appropriate to the function of their position who also understands and shares the values of the non-English speaking background community they are employed to work with and their employing agency. (CEH 2008: 14)

CMY has chosen the term ‘bicultural worker’ over ‘bilingual worker’ to reflect the emphasis on *cultural* skills and knowledge as opposed to *language* skills.

For instance, a bicultural worker may be from a particular ethnic background (Somali) but is employed to work more broadly with all African communities. The worker may not speak all of the African languages he/she is working across, but has a depth of cultural knowledge, professional experience and links with communities that make them effective at engaging cross-culturally across a number of African communities. A worker from a mixed Polynesian background may not speak a language other than English, but may be employed as a bicultural worker to work with Tongan young people because of their cultural knowledge and their capacity to link to this target group.

CEH have recommended that: “*Working effectively between or across culture requires a separate skill set and need not be embedded within the definition of bilingual staff.*” (CEH 2008: 5)

Bicultural or multicultural?

It is important to recognise that the term ‘bicultural’ should not be taken to literally mean ‘having two cultural backgrounds’. CMY recognises that culture is dynamic and changing, and that many people identify as multicultural – sharing understanding and experiences with multiple cultural groups. For example, someone may have mixed parentage, have grown up in two or more countries, and identify with a youth subculture as well as a particular ethnic culture.

Definition

With these considerations in mind, CMY has developed the following definition for a bicultural worker:

Bicultural worker: A person employed to work specifically with people or communities with whom they share similar cultural experiences and understandings, and who is employed to use their cultural skills and knowledge to negotiate and communicate between communities and their employing agency.

As the definition sets out, CMY uses the term ‘bicultural worker’ to describe people with particular cultural skills and knowledge that are specifically called upon in a particular role. Bicultural workers, however, generally bring a much broader range of skills to their role. For example, bicultural workers employed to work with young people or families are also likely to have skills that include engaging with people in challenging and often stressful situations, providing support, advocacy, networking, facilitation, program design and delivery. Titles like youth worker, family support worker, settlement support worker and community liaison officer should be used accordingly and bicultural skills and knowledge be acknowledged as one part of these roles – rather than as a job title in itself.

Consultation Findings on the strengths and complexities of bi-cultural work

Research has shown that bicultural workers can be instrumental in the success of community engagement strategies (e.g. Corkery et al. 1997; Jackson et al. 2001). The following provides context around the strengths and qualities that bicultural workers bring to youth and family work, as well as the complexities faced by workers, managers and organisations. These points were raised at the network meetings with both bicultural workers and managers.

Strengths (identified by all)

"It's amazing how much better we work with communities with the knowledge and expertise of bicultural workers." (Community services manager, CMY Bicultural Worker Network 2007)

- Greater service access by clients from refugee and migrant communities – workers who are trusted by communities can provide pathways for clients to access services.
- More culturally appropriate services – refugees and migrants who access youth and family services often feel more comfortable talking with someone from their own cultural background.
- Stronger connections and credibility with communities – particularly providing a link between services and new and emerging communities.
- Greater understanding of issues within communities (especially politics), and how to navigate these sensitively.
- Greater sensitivity to the needs, issues and experiences that young people and communities are facing, and ability to translate this into the service context.
- An opportunity to provide educative roles within organisations – informing/up-skilling other workers so that they can provide more effective and culturally competent services.
- A culturally and linguistically diverse workforce who can bring different perspectives and creative ideas to solving problems.
- An opportunity to break down barriers of 'dependency'/need – new communities are not just seen in deficit as 'clients', but as workers as well.

Issues identified by bicultural workers

At network meetings, participants were asked to describe some of the difficulties they experiences as bicultural workers.

The following issues and complexities were identified:

- There is a high degree of pressure to help – from individuals and community. The expectation is that you will be able to solve all problems and provide for everyone. Community can expect availability 24/7 – in work and private situations;
- Hard to maintain boundaries without risking offence;
- It can be hard to convince young people about working with their family – there may be more shame, fear;
- Young people may not want to talk to you – shame (depends on issue), keeping up appearances;
- Fear re: confidentiality being broken (this is sometimes the case, so it breaks down trust);
- You can feel caught between two cultures – you can see both sides;
- You may not be using all the generalist services that could help the client – want to take everything on yourself – maybe lack of trust in generalist services being able to really understand and do a good job;
- Worker may personalise the problems in the community more – *'It's my issue/responsibility'*;
- Other workers not taking responsibility for working with CLD communities;
- Hard to engage your community about the Western ways of doing things (like work practices);
- Workplace may not recognise the extra complexity of the work;
- Limited number of workers in many communities – workload can be very high. Worker burnout and exhaustion can be a problem;
- May be expected to work outside area of knowledge. Need to be very aware of the Australian system – may be new/unfamiliar to you too;
- Expected to understand every aspect of culture – other workers can be insensitive to the complexity of community politics;

- Where there are particular ideas/perceptions within own community about the organisation that you work for, this can create pressures (e.g. if an organisation is perceived negatively by community, worker can also be labelled as such);

Issues identified by managers

The following issues and complexities have been identified through CMY's consultations, forums and literature review.

Recruitment of bicultural staff

- Recruitment processes can be a barrier to employing bicultural workers. The process in obtaining a job can be daunting, and the recruitment process itself may not necessarily give the worker the opportunity to 'sell' themselves. It could possibly be a worker's first formal interview experience.
- Tokenism – Employing a bicultural worker for the sake of 'diversity policy' without proper support can set bicultural workers up to fail. The organisation then thinks: 'Recruiting bicultural workers is too hard/that didn't work'.

Skills development and career pathways for bicultural workers

- Workers sometimes get stuck in bilingual/bicultural worker roles (junior roles) and are not provided opportunities to move into other roles. This requires support for workers to develop different skills, recognition of existing skills, and willingness to invest in bicultural workers for future of organisation.
- All staff needs support in developing skills and advancing their careers within organisations. Where opportunities for advancement within organisations are not available, or there is a lack of recognition of the professionalism/skills of bicultural workers, then relationships between bicultural workers and organisations can appear paternalistic.

Providing effective supervision

- Supervisors making generalisations can be a problem i.e. sometimes things are seen as a 'bicultural worker issue', but actually it affects all workers.
- Issues with workers becoming client – Personal issues that impact on a workers' capacity to do their job are invariably experienced by all workers (bicultural or otherwise) at some time, although the nature of difficulty may be different (e.g. illness, trauma, family obligations). Supervisors may not distinguish between temporary issues that arise and ongoing patterns.

Managing staff in a cross cultural context – being able to negotiate age/gender/cultural/power issues is a complex issue for all supervisors in establishing good working relationships with those they supervise. Negotiating the complexities of power imbalances can be particularly difficult where the worker and supervisor have different cultural expectations of this relationship
- Tension around discussing issues of race and culture – Cultural issues and norms regarding respect for authority and workplace customs can be difficult for the worker and supervisor to discuss comfortably. Avoiding or ignoring the discussion of the influence of culture within the supervisory relationship may only worsen the tension between supervisee and supervisor. Also over-interpreting or emphasising the influence of culture on the relationship can have the same detrimental effect.
- Supervisors need to be cognisant of power dynamics within communities and between bicultural workers – potential of punitive relationship between workers from same community developing.

Managing workloads and stresses

- There can be unrealistic expectations placed on bicultural workers by organisations – bicultural workers are sometimes expected to respond to everything related to a particular community and be expected to know everything about a particular community. Unrealistic expectations can be linked to worker burnout.
- Managers may not recognise or have difficulty knowing how to support bicultural workers to negotiate the complexities of working within their own communities i.e. boundaries are naturally blurred and it

can be very difficult for a bicultural worker to 'close their door' on someone from their own community, even if this contravenes an organisation's policies or is outside a worker's role.

- Workers may be called upon frequently by co-workers to interpret or to provide advice/support in situations drawing on their cultural knowledge. The skills, expertise and advice inherent in this may not be explicitly recognised within a bicultural worker's work plan.
- Workers may be experiencing their own settlement issues, requiring flexibility from employers.

Workplace culture and practices

- Bicultural workers may be unfamiliar with the workplace culture and expectations of Australian community services. Managers/organisations can make assumptions that workers will have the same expectations and understanding, which can lead to misunderstanding if not appropriately and sensitively addressed. Issues around acceptable workplace practices can apply for any worker and should not be seen as a 'bicultural worker issue' unless related to a lack of familiarity.
- Those with limited English may experience problems using accepted 'sector language' i.e. terminology and phrasing. For example, the term "bad person" could be used to describe a client displaying a whole range of behaviours that are of concern. In relation to case notes where clear and concise language is needed, managers and supervisors often need to spend extra time to ensure work is appropriately documented.

Meeting funding requirements vs creativity and flexibility

"There is definitely a dominant discourse that we have to adhere to – It's all about 'targets' and 'milestones' and 'deliverables'. This shapes our work and impacts on creativity or different ways of working. (Coordinator, ethno-specific community organisation, CMY Bicultural Worker Network 2007)

- Managers must take into account the issue of having to meet funding body requirements as well as securing future funding. This can create difficulties in trying alternative and creative ways of working.
- Processes of documentation and evidence gathering within the community sector have become essential in securing and maintaining funding. Virgona & Waterhouse (2003) have called this phenomenon 'proceduralisation'. The need to document appropriately has become *"so paramount that our research threw up examples of culturally appropriate individuals with limited English literacy who were rejected as job applicants in ethnically specific workplaces in place of fully literate English Speaking Background (ESB) applicants"*.
- Difficulties in recruiting bicultural workers include high demands of some work programs, particularly 12 month projects, where workers are expected to 'hit the ground running' and there's no time for up-skilling.
- Emphasis on output and efficiency can override the needs of the community. The 'west is best' view can infiltrate the workplace and can be dictated by mainstream services that are not fully aware of community needs and how they should/could be met.

Bilingual workers and interpreting

- Bicultural workers who are also bilingual are often called upon to act as interpreters, often without organisational policies or guidelines around whether or not a professional interpreter is required, and how/where this fits into their workplan.

Strategies to strengthen bicultural youth and family work practice

The following provides some strategies for individual workers, supervisors and organisations in acknowledging the issues and complexities outlined above, and strengthening good bicultural youth and family work practice in the community sector.

Many of the principles of good cross-cultural practice with clients are equally relevant in terms of organisational practice around supervision and support for staff.

The particular strategies below have been identified by bi-cultural workers and managers through the CMY bicultural network(s) and the literature review undertaken by CMY in 2010.

Strategies for bicultural workers

With clients and communities

- Have a separate work mobile and turn it off when you are not working (unless for a specific purpose or for emergency calls).
- Hand over to other workers, share the burden, and remember you are not responsible for all the clients/people from your community.
- Explain your work role to community members so they find it easier to understand your boundaries (i.e. different from friendship).
- Make a plan for emergencies when you are not available (such as after-hours or on the weekend), so that clients can get what they need but you also have time for your life/family. If a client calls you outside of your working hours and it is not an emergency, validate their experience and make a plan to help later, or connect them to someone who can help.
- If you have a problem with a community member and boundaries, some intervention at a particular time/place that is comfortable and appropriate might be necessary.
- Rely on organisational policy to create those boundaries where it might seem rude to do so culturally speaking e.g. "I am sorry I can't give you my address and personal phone numbers because my organisation's policy doesn't allow workers to do so."

With your organisation

- Ask for clear guidelines and policies from your organisation (in negotiation with you and other bicultural staff, so they are culturally appropriate).
- Reflect on what support and supervision you need and what style might work best for you. Good managers and supervisors are open to different models of supervision and professional development – for example, a peer support model or group supervision with a person external to (and independent of) the organisation creates a different dynamic and may allow for discussion of issues that may be difficult to discuss in supervision with your direct manager.
- Speak to your employer regarding your role as a worker and community member so that you can get help to discuss the blurry/tricky issues.
- Take time to reflect on your own capacity and work role and what is actually possible. For example, what part of your life does your voluntary community role(s) have? Some assistance you give to others might be in that capacity, which is okay, but it is good to discuss this at work and have clarity yourself.
- Be open to discussing work issues with trusted co-workers. All youth and family workers engaged with refugee and migrant communities face challenges around boundaries, sustaining themselves and preventing burnout. Finding common ground can then provide an opportunity to approach your manager with a joint request for more support.

Strategies for organisations

Recruitment

- In the recruitment process, allow some flexibility in how applicants can respond to advertised positions. Perhaps allow pre-interviews over the telephone instead of written responses to selection criteria (CEH 2005).
- In employing people who are respected in the community, managers may be able to use non-traditional employment methods (e.g. not just interviewing applicant and contacting referees). As an employer you can ask the candidate to provide some community referees to check how this person is regarded in the community.

Orientation and induction

- For bicultural workers who are new to the Australian workforce, supervisors need to ensure there is time and support given at the start to orient new employees and familiarise workers with workplace practices. Some workplace practices may need to be explained – for example, filling out a leave form.
- Learning the culture of an office setting will take time for any worker, but for some bicultural workers time and effort may be needed to ensure that workers and supervisors have shared expectations about job roles and responsibilities. Making things clear from the start will reduce problems and misunderstandings later.
- Explain performance measures to workers as part of initial induction so they are clearly understood. If bicultural workers are clear about performance measures and there is open communication, then supervisors can address those who are not meeting performance measures as they would with any other worker.

Work practices and strategies

- Ensure bicultural workers who are required to use their cultural/language skills to interpret in situations have this recognised in their workplan. If this is not addressed it may create stress for the staff member and conflict in the workplace. Managers should regularly monitor the workload of their multi-lingual staff and structure their work accordingly (CEH 2008, p.16).
- Ensure there is clear communication around roles. In early stages, workers can be very enthusiastic about their role, and not seeing dangers/risks of having very blurred boundaries (living/ working within community, need for self-care, not internalising issues).
- Bicultural workers who wear many 'hats' can be under a lot of pressure. What happens when workers are using the organisation's resources/ time to do other work or fulfil other commitments (e.g. photocopying, making phone calls)? In considering an organisational response, be prepared to be flexible and allow some give and take. Workers from all backgrounds can sometimes use work time to do other things – this is not an issue that is restricted to bicultural workers.

Sharing responsibilities within the workplace

- Ensure there are structures in place to share workloads so a bicultural worker can say: 'I can't help you, but here's someone who can...'. Have other people who can do the job so not just one person, but all workers working effectively with community.
- Support other staff within the organisation to understand the role of bicultural workers – i.e. you don't have to call on the same worker for every issue relating to a particular community.

Policies and procedures

- It is the responsibility of organisations to establish policies and procedures to support and supervise workers effectively. Managers themselves should make time to reflect, review and rethink about the effectiveness of their policies and procedures.
- It is very important that the roles of workers are made clear to both clients and staff, and that position descriptions accurately describe the tasks required and the breadth of the role (CEH 2007).

- It will not be easy to recruit or retain bilingual and bicultural staff without fostering organisational culture, policies and practices that support workplace diversity. This may include mentoring support for bilingual staff, processes for dispute resolution and recognition of different religious and cultural practices and obligations (CEH 2007).

Funding and reporting

- One of the roles of middle managers may be to advocate for more flexibility around the description of work outputs for bicultural workers, while still respecting funding requirements.

Developing a culturally-competent workforce

- Provide agency-wide training on incorporating bicultural approaches into youth and family work practice at the organisational as well as a client/community level. Raising awareness amongst all staff about the issues and complexities faced by bicultural workers will help ensure that bicultural workers have the support and respect of their colleagues.
- Make an effort to learn about the culture of bicultural workers and develop cultural awareness and competency amongst all staff in the workplace.

Example: Sharing expertise

One community organisation holds group information sessions for all staff. Bicultural workers conduct presentations for their co-workers in an area of expertise, most often relating to their own community or client group. This highlights the knowledge/expertise that bicultural workers bring to an organisation; provides a forum in which workers are able to tell their own stories and experiences; and builds up workers' public speaking ability and confidence, particularly as workers are able to talk and discuss information that they are familiar with.

Providing opportunities for reflective practice

- Provide opportunities for all workers to give feedback into organisational practices and support structures, and report back to the staff team about reflective practice. Methods to encourage workers to feel comfortable providing input into organisational practices include both formal and informal, such as questionnaires and group discussion sessions.
- Hold annual review/ planning days to discuss issues and complexities around bicultural workers' roles.

Supporting career pathways

- Provide opportunities for advancement for all staff (including bicultural workers), exploring different levels/pathways within an organisation, or managers and supervisors acting as references for bicultural workers and encouraging them to apply for different jobs can boost their confidence as well as their skills.

Findings from the literature

There is evidence in the literature of particular challenges to career development and promotion for bicultural workers¹ (Smith et al., 2007; Department of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance, 2002; and Roberts et al., 2008). Supervisors need to address and support the professional development needs of bicultural staff (Owen and England, 2005: 686). The following case study and recommendations were identified in the literature:

Career progression:

- Personal development plans to be undertaken, which could include interview training, writing curriculum vitae, planning a career;
- Formal systems of support in developing career progression skills and particularly formalising and making transparent systems of interview preparation.

¹ Often called 'minority culture workers' in North American literature

Diversity management:

- Diversity awareness training for other staff to include positive recognition of bicultural staff's skills and competencies and assistance in incorporating these skills and competencies in the Australian setting;

Mentoring:

- Mentoring systems need to make training and learning needs of bicultural staff visible and valued;
- Review of mentor update courses to include diversity training/issues, language differences/support and emotional effects of migration;
- Mentoring systems to include support for mentors who mentor bicultural staff.

Promotion:

- Ensuring formal procedures of feedback for unsuccessful candidates and ensuring that the problems or weaknesses are subsequently addressed by the applicant and their manager.

Practice/nature of work:

- Acceptance of cultural differences in practice within standards of safe practice;

Complaints:

- Information on procedures in Australia and employment rights to be more effectively disseminated to bicultural staff (particularly those educated or trained overseas);
- Direct more attention to the importance of informal social processes that may prevent difficulties escalating into formal complaints and grievances.

Supervision-specific strategies

Elements of effective supervision

Role of the supervisor

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that because of the inherent power differential that exists between supervisors and supervisees, it is the responsibility of the supervisor, rather than the supervisee, to be aware of and consider the typical barriers to cross-cultural supervision (Daniels et al. 1999: 201; Fong and Lease, 1996: 392). It is the supervisor's role to open the space for discussion about how the influence of culture and the impact of privilege can be explored within the supervisory relationship and which methods or models of supervision might be most effective in terms of providing educational, supportive and administrative supervision.

Supervisors may be concerned about being perceived as racist by bringing a supervisee's culture into supervisory sessions.

This is a challenge for both partners but clearly the onus is upon the supervisor to have the personal and professional competence to manage this situation sensitively and appropriately. A commitment to equal opportunities and ethnically sensitive supervision is no guarantee of inoculation against the stresses of cross-cultural supervision (Nadirshaw and Torry, 2004).

Cultural self-awareness of the supervisor

A common starting point for effective cross-cultural supervision is the supervisor's awareness of his or her own culture or social location.

For supervisors influenced by Euro-Western discourse, this requires continual critical self-reflection about the use of taken-for-granted authority and privilege, so that domination over others is not silently reinforced. (Hair and O'Donoghue 2009: 78-79).

Supervisors need to be conscious of and reflect honestly on their own culture and privilege in order to appreciate the importance of opening the space to discuss the impact of culture on the relationship and to do so sensitively and skilfully.

‘Ingredients’ of cross-cultural supervision discussions

The suggestions below for opening up conversations about the impact of culture are adapted from literature on cross-cultural supervision in the counselling, nursing and postgraduate supervision fields. The literature recommends that the following elements be included in cross-cultural discussions early on in the supervisory relationship:

- The supervisor’s and supervisee’s cultural backgrounds;
- The ways in which the values and traditions that are associated with their cultural backgrounds may (or may not) influence their work goals and their expectations of supervision. This element is particularly important as it requires exploration of the impact that each person’s culture might have for *him* or *her* and *his* or *her* work. It combats the assumption that all people of the same culture will view things in the same way and incorporates more of each person’s personality and individual working styles. As Nadirshaw and Torry [2004] highlight:

Ironically, cultural knowledge, used simplistically, may be a dangerous thing. ... [People] may attribute cultural values to someone on the basis of an ethnic label which mistakenly assumes that general cultural insights apply in every instance.

This discussion will hopefully also enhance supervisors’ awareness that bicultural workers are not necessarily experts in relation to all members of their cultural group, by virtue of their cultural background (Nadirshaw and Torry, 2004).

- Important cross-cultural issues that are relevant to the supervisor and supervisee’s communication with each other;
- The issue of status and authority in one-to-one communication and how it is expressed and perceived, including cross-cultural variations;
- The supervisor’s and the supervisee’s bicultural youth and family work strengths and limitations.

Addressing role conflicts within bicultural work

As we have seen through the consultation, role conflict between the bicultural worker’s responsibilities to his or her employer and to his or her community was identified as one of the major challenges of bicultural youth and family work. Husband and Hoffman (2004) recommend the following activity that may be helpful in terms of engaging with bicultural workers’ likely role-conflicts. Supervisors and supervisees could share their responses with each other.

- How many different roles do you occupy (in both your work setting and personal life)? List according to ‘professional’ and ‘personal’ roles.
- Can you identify instances of role-conflict – where there is a contradiction between the demands of two or more roles? List as many as you can.
- Think of a particular instance of role conflict and reflect on how you dealt/deal with it.
- What does this response tell you about yourself in terms of the value you place on different roles or the normative framework you operate within?

Clarifying communication and reducing misunderstandings

A number of authors suggest strategies to clarify cross-cultural communication and to reduce misunderstandings. Suggestions include:

- When discussing expectations for supervision sessions, the supervisor should make a ground rule that if anyone is uncertain about what is being discussed or has been said, they should express this at the time (Fong and Lease, 1996: 400).
- Many authors recommend feedback or debriefing mechanisms to ensure that cross-cultural supervision sessions have been understood by all parties and to allow for positive and negative critique of the sessions (Fong and Lease, 1996; Owen and English, 2005: 682; and Adams and Cargill, 2003). Feedback forms or debriefing sessions could include questions such as “What was most helpful in supervision today?” and “What seemed unclear or unhelpful in supervision today?” (Fong and Lease, 1996: 400).
- Alternatively, supervisors might ask supervisees to email them shortly after the supervision meeting with an outline of the key points discussed and any actions to be taken by each. This allows both parties the opportunity to clarify any potential misunderstandings about expectations before the next meeting (Adams and Cargill, 2003). It would be important to assess the bicultural youth and family

worker's workload and typing competency before imposing this additional duty on them. This strategy does have the advantage of seeking the supervisee's understanding of the meeting, rather than having the supervisor email the supervisee his or her understanding of the meeting and outcomes and having the supervisee simply defer because of different concepts of the hierarchical – or otherwise - nature of the relationship.

Getting to know each other better on a personal level

Having the time to invite and bear witness to a newcomer paraprofessional's family stories can make a large difference in creating collaboration and trust (Owen and English, 2005: 680).

Bicultural workers and their supervisors have informed CMY that juggling professional versus personal commitments to their communities is a major challenge. Accordingly, the more aware supervisors are of this challenge, the more support they may be able to provide.

Strategies for effective supervision

At one of the managers meeting (May 2008) it was recommended that managing cross-culturally was a priority issue and that a meeting dedicated to the topic of cross-cultural supervision would be helpful. In May 2009 CMY convened a workshop: "Exploring issues of race, culture and ethnicity in the context of supervision: Workshop for managers and supervisors supporting bicultural workers."

Suggestions emerging from the meeting included:

- Consider experimenting with different models of supervision. While individual supervision may be necessary, the increased use of collective approaches to supervision and support may be more suited to a culturally diverse work force. Peer support models, group supervision and supervision (group or individual) with a person external to the organisation will all provide opportunities for workers to explore what support works best for them, to see how others make use of supervision, and to raise issues or seek advice on issues they may not be comfortable raising with their direct supervisor.
- Being sensitive to the complexities faced by bicultural workers may mean supervisors can broker a buffer between workers and their community/ies. For instance, if a worker has difficulty saying 'no' to members of their community, ask: "Would you like me to say 'no'?"
- Create space to build trust between worker and supervisor – this is the same for any supervisor/supervisee relationship, but recognise that this takes time and, for some bicultural workers who are new to the sector, the expectations of supervisory relationship may need to be unpacked.
- Try to ask 'Why was it that that didn't work for you?' when exploring challenges.
- Within supervision, explore shifting away from focussing on tasks/administration and provide opportunities for reflective practice to explore some of the cultural perspectives on work.
- If there are issues to be worked through that involve bicultural workers, use language that does not make workers feel targeted/shamed, e.g. "That's what we do" rather than "You can't do that".
- Effective supervisor/worker relationships often come down to having champions/managers who sit down and support workers in a flexible way.

Managers and supervisors indicated that they wanted more discussion on the issue of cross-cultural supervision and there was interest in exploring different models of supervision and practising communicating cross-culturally in role plays and other exercises. A literature review was undertaken in response to that feedback, focusing on research into best practice, case studies and effective strategies and tools to use in cross-cultural supervision of bicultural youth and family workers. The following outlines some of the findings of the literature as it relates to good practice models.

The literature review revealed limited empirical evidence of effective cross-cultural supervision strategies specific to working with bicultural youth and family workers. There is recognition in the literature that cross-cultural supervision in human services delivery is an under-researched area (Hair and O-Donoghue 2009, 70-71; Nadirshaw and Torry, 2004; Daniels et al. 1999: 191; Crisante, 1997; Fong and Lease, 1996: 388; and Leong and Wagner, 1994).

The literature on cross-cultural supervision generally provides strategies for effective supervision of workers who are from a different cultural background from the supervisor, in the areas of mental health and other health work (e.g. nursing, community health work) and also postgraduate study. Some of these techniques are outlined below as a starting point for opening conversations with supervisees about how culture affects the supervisory relationship and the supervisee's work.

Group supervision

Group supervision is recommended by a number of authors, including Fong and Lease (1996: 400). Supervisees need to feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences and concerns in effective group supervision sessions. Fong and Lease suggest that getting-acquainted exercises help group members to see similarities and differences amongst themselves. They offer the following exercises in order to get the group thinking about the impact of culture on their own lives and their work (1996: 401-402):

- The "name game": have each participant state their name and cultural background, which is repeated around the group by each next person. This should be followed by a discussion of how it felt for the participants to identify as being from the different cultural backgrounds. This exercise "desensitizes students to mentioning ethnicity in their group and reveals intra-group differences, an important multicultural concept."
- Structured interviews or a set of questions each participant is asked to answer about their families, followed by a discussion of the influence of culture on family structure, rules, communication patterns and interactions;
- Home video presentations: emphasize the impact of culture and the diversity of participants

As with individual supervision sessions, goals and ground rules should be discussed in the early stages.

Example – Group supervision

One community organisation decided to trial group/peer supervision sessions for both bicultural workers (e.g. all African workers meeting together) and for staff more generally, with a focus on providing a forum for discussing cross-cultural issues and case analysis from different cultural perspectives. This group supervision model is being trialled, so the organisation has yet to reflect on how this works and is managed in terms of ensuring bicultural workers are not marginalised within the organisation.

When discussing supervisees' cases or concerns, Fong and Lease (1996: 401) recommend the 'round-robin' approach - where each member of the group is offered an opportunity to speak - to discussing issues to encourage participation and diversity in thinking in group supervision sessions.

Other authors have recommended similar approaches. Hays and Chang suggest that supervisors ask group members to discuss the ways in which they are similar and different to each other (2003: 142). This can also increase multicultural knowledge as different group members learn culturally specific information about their own and others' cultures (including the supervisor's). They recommend the following questions to promote the dialogue:

- How would you describe your cultural heritage?
- Which cultural group do you feel most comfortable working with?
- Which group do you feel most anxious about?
- Who in the supervision group do you feel most similar to?
- What challenges do you have in supervision as a function of your culture?
- How important is the cultural makeup (and identity) of your peers (and clients) in social interactions?

Similarly, Nadirshaw and Torry (2004) recommend asking group supervisees to:

- Describe themselves ethnically;
- Describe who in their family experience their sense of ethnic identity;
- Discuss which groups other than their own they think they understand best;
- Discuss which characteristics of their ethnic group they like most and which they like least; and
- Discuss how they and their own family would react to seeking the services of a health professional.

The suggestions above regarding opening up conversations about culture in group supervision sessions are also potentially useful for reminding supervisors and supervisees of the significant intra-group differences in cultural groups.

According to the literature and feedback from CMY's meetings with bicultural staff, there is a demand for networks or regular meetings between bicultural workers, so that they can share and learn from each other. Such opportunities are seen as "continuing education" prospects (Gerrard, 2004 and Ziguras et al., 2000).

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