Immigrant Welfare: A Research Perspective

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Foreword

In its research agenda, the Social Welfare Research Centre has four "population" streams which deal with: the welfare of young children; the welfare of women and of families; the welfare of the workforce; and the welfare of elderly people.

The Centre does not have a team which deals exclusively with the welfare of immigrants. This does not imply any lack of interest in that third of our population which is of recent ethnic origin; it simply means that it was not considered appropriate, from a research perspective, to separate welfare issues relating to immigrants from those relating to the Australian population as a whole.

The special position immigrants occupy in Australian society, however, has to be recognized. Hence there is a need to develop a conceptual basis for including the ethnic component in research topics. For this reason, Michael Liffman of the Ecumenical Migration Centre* was asked to prepare a background paper which might guide researchers towards the development of such a conceptual basis. The paper contains material which is useful not only for researchers but also for those planning and delivering services for immigrants; accordingly, the Centre has decided to publish it.

Liffman takes three analytical questions : what is encompassed by the term "immigrant"; how are immigrants affected by welfare systems; and what determines outcomes in immigrant/agency interactions. He discusses four factors which must always be taken into account in developing any services for immigrants; language and communication; culture; experience and knowledge; and resettlement. With a grasp of these issues Liffman deals illustratively with two "welfare fields", social security and child care, identifying:

a) issues common to the whole community,

b) issues common to all, but in which immigrant circumstance intensifies any problems; and

c) issues unique to immigrants.

The framework for analysis should prove of great help to those planning
research studies and those planning and delivering services. The
framework is just that - for as Liffman points out, there are no firm
answers to this issue, just options!

Adam Graycar
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April 1981

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INTRODUCTION

This paper was prepared at the request of the Social Welfare Research Centre following discussions about the most appropriate way in which the Centre could deal with issues which relate to the welfare of immigrants. Since that early conception of the purpose of the project, this paper has evolved in two significant ways.

First, it soon became apparent that a simple listing of issues of concern to immigrants, and the research implications of these issues, might not be very fruitful. Such statements are already in abundant supply. The Commonwealth Government's Review of Services to Migrants (the Galbally Report), the more recent Survey of Information Needs of Migrants, and the N.S.W. Ethnic Affairs Commission's Report "Participation" have added to, and maybe consolidated, a substantial amount of documentation already in existence. (A valuable summary of the information available prior to the Galbally Report is contained in "It's Not the Thought That Counts ...: Reviews of the Immigrant Situation before Galbally" by Lidio Bertelli in Migration Action Vol. IV Number 1 (1979)). Indeed, to those working in migrant welfare, it seemed that the need was not for the generation of more research into migrant needs, but for more action on those needs, or at least for research clearly directed at relieving - rather than simply identifying - them. Moreover, one of the particular difficulties in much of the current attention being paid to "migrant problems" is the tendency, inherent in that approach, to regard migrant issues as separate from the more general welfare issues facing the Australian community, and to see them from a "problem" perspective. Such a focus is based on a superficial understanding of the meaning of multiculturalism which, both philosophically and pragmatically, falls short of an effective approach to migrant welfare in a country which is the second most cosmopolitan in the world.

Accordingly, the approach which has been taken in this paper is to develop an analytic framework through which the way in which any welfare issue relates to immigrants can be systematically identified, and the key variables made more specific. In this way, it is hoped, immigrant issues may be more readily seen in their larger context, rather than as isolated, peripheral matters, and any consideration of welfare systems can incorporate the immigrant dimension from the outset. From this perspective, research possibilities will emerge which are integrally related to other wider questions.

Second, although this paper was originally directed specifically at the work of the SWRC, its approach has been to make it relevant to other agencies, and to planning and evaluative, as well as research, functions. Again, what is offered is an analytic framework which such agencies might attempt to use in assessing their own service and planning activities, or in establishing directions for research.

The paper suggests three basic analytic questions which should be asked of any welfare issue in order that the immigrant interest in the subject can be ascertained. The first three sections of the paper discuss these questions in detail, suggest their components and, together, comprise the framework referred to above.

In broad terms, the basic issues are:

1. *What, in specific terms, is encompassed by the term "immigrant"?*

    It is suggested that the key aspects of the immigrant circumstance - which, in any specific situation, can be identified in fairly concrete terms - are:

    - language and communication
    - culture
    - experience and knowledge
    - resettlement

    Alongside these factors must then be placed the immigrants' "non-immigrant" roles, e.g. socio-economic status, family status, etc.

2. *How are immigrants affected by the particular welfare system under study?*

    In specifically examining the relevant field to answer this question, it is useful, both conceptually and empirically, to consider:

    - those issues faced by immigrants in their dealings with the system which are in fact not distinctive to immigrants but are encountered by all users of that system

    - those issues faced by immigrants which are common to other users of the system but which affect immigrants more actuely due to circumstances arising out of the immigrant situation

    - those issues faced by immigrants uniquely which arise directly out of the immigrant situation.

3. *What are the factors which determine the outcome identified in question 2, i.e. what determines the interaction between immigrants and welfare systems?*

In general terms, the variables which should be examined appear to be:

(a)   the basic orientation of the system:

. assimilative and universal

. assimilative and ethnic-targetted

. pluralist

. ethnic

(b)   its location within the larger welfare structure

(c)   working methods within the system

Two examples - that of social security and child care - are used.

The approach suggested in this paper requires use, testing, development and change. But fundamental to it is the recognition that immigrants are a full and equal component of the nation's welfare constituency. Graycar[1] has written of the role the welfare system has in determining the level of exclusion in Australian society, i.e. what groups are excluded, by what means, from which of society's benefits? As such, the welfare system is part of the battle-ground in which several of the key interests in Australian society stake their claim on the community's physical and moral resources. Seen in this framework, immigrants risk a double exclusion. Inasmuch as they are users of the welfare system they face the deprivations encountered to varying degrees by all users of welfare - at a level likely to increase in the 1980s. Inasmuch as welfare planners and deliverers fail to accord immigrants the same rights and opport-unities conceded to non-immigrant Australian welfare users, immigrants face a degree of exclusion even from the welfare system.

A focus on immigrants as an integrated part of the welfare system, as well as according immigrants their rights as citizens, can yield important insights into the overall operation of that system, and especially its treatment of other sections of the community which in some way deviate from the rather constrained norm which the system currently assumes, e.g. unemployed youth,

(1) Graycar, A. "Social and political constraints" in R. Henderson (ed.)
    The Welfare Stakes, Melbourne: I.A.E.S.R. 1981, Chap. 5.

single mothers, the disabled. For those concerned with changing situations, as well as understanding them - whether their strategies be those of research and policy development or community and political action - an integrated focus can indicate the wider interests, populations and forces which are embodied in the various policy options.

To use a simple example: on the narrowest, most excluding approach - but one which still applies in many authorities, institutions and agencies - services are made available to all those who can negotiate them in the customary language of an ostensible Anglo-Australian norm: English. Even the simplest piece of observational research will show that this denies proper welfare service to many citizens. An approach looking at immigrant needs, but without any underlying analytic framework, might identify this as a problem which is either inevitable and must be lived with; or which can be dealt with by some rather *ad hoc* action, such as the use of other family members or volunteers as interpreters; or - at best - requires the use of the Telephone Interpreter Service, multilingual literature or some other form of minimal service of last resort. A focus which integrates immigrant needs into the overall system might question some basic assumptions about communication strategies, recruitment and deployment of personnel, and service priorities, which might be of relevance not only to immigrants but to other people who are excluded from effective service by virtue of their ignorance of proper procedures, their intimidation by bureaucratic processes, or their inaccessibility to the service.

The concluding section of this paper looks at the implications of this approach for research. Some specific research topics are suggested but, in fact, agencies will have their own areas of concern, and the range of welfare issues which are of relevance to immigrants is as broad as the welfare field itself.

More importantly, therefore, several strategies are suggested whereby the approach developed in this paper can be used either to integrate immigrant perspectives into any research which is to be undertaken, or to consider in more detail some of the key themes and factors discussed by examining the way they manifest themselves in one or several areas of welfare.

SECTION I - THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

Many of Australia's citizens are immigrants. This has implications for policies and service systems even though the term "immigrant" lacks terminological specificity. Perhaps, therefore, the first step in developing a practical analysis of this issue is to identify in more precise terms what is being talked about in any discussion on immigrants and their needs, so that empirical variables of relevance to policy and service planning can be identified.

First and foremost it must be realized that immigrant identity is only part of an individual's total identity. He or she remains - in addition to being a migrant - a citizen, or at least a permanent resident of Australia; a member of a family; a member of a particular socio-economic stratum; a person with a certain workforce status; and, above all, an individual. The role that his immigrant identity has in the total constellation of factors that determine his place in society is, in any specific instance, problematic, and cannot be taken for granted. Many immigrants do not perceive their immigrant origin as being of significance and, indeed, in some instances, would prefer it to be ignored. Others identify their immigrant origin as being a most important facet of their total personality and situation in the community.

Inasmuch as immigrant identity is important in any individual instance, it then becomes necessary to further analyze the components of this identity. The following conceptualization is by no means especially sophisticated or theoretical; it simply attempts to introduce more precision into the under- standing of the meaning of the term "immigrant". What is suggested is that there are four basic facets to the immigrant identity or the immigrant ex- perience. Taken together they assist in understanding the implications of the term "immigrant" for the development of policies and services.

(It should be noted, too, that the facets of immigrant identity discussed in the following do not necessarily apply *only* to immigrants, although almost certainly the degree of their operation and the extent of their impact will affect immigrants far more intensely than others. Thus, a poorly educated Australian-born person may have some difficulty with technical or bureaucratic English, and a bush-dweller's life experience may have provided him with little knowledge of Department of Social Security procedures - but the non-

English speaking immigrant's disadvantage in this regard is certainly more acute. However, it is useful to understand that the immigrant's difficulty is not necessarily unique but rather an extension of that faced by many other Australians, and that the study of the welfare needs of immigrants can therefore yield insights of value to wider issues).

1. Language and Communication

By virtue of the fact that he is an immigrant, that is, was born in a country other than Australia, a person may have a different capacity in language and communication in English than his Australian-born counterparts. Of course, no generalizations can be made in this respect. The capacity of an individual immigrant to communicate in English may range from the two extremes of complete capacity in English (bearing in mind, of course, that many immigrants come from English-speaking countries) to a total lack of any capacity in the English language. These two extremes are easy to identify, and in the case of the latter, the need for some special provision to overcome the total obstacle of speaking no English is easy to recognise (notwithstanding that our community often remains remarkably uncaring in the face of this sort of disadvantage). However, what is less commonly realized is that in between these two extremes there can be a vast range of different capacities to communicate in English. Some people may speak and understand English fairly well; others may understand but not speak especially well. Some people may cope with both speaking and understanding fairly well in normal situations, but may have great difficulty with written English, with bureaucratic English, with technical language or with communication in situations of tension or distress. Some people may appear to speak or understand more English than they do, may overestimate their own ability, or in some instances may be too embarrassed or ashamed to admit their difficulty. All of these capacities relate to the effectiveness of the communication that can take place between a client and a service system or provider. Usually the complex and subtle range encompassed by this issue is totally neglected by service systems. The rudimentary provision which is occasionally made - for example, the provision of translated leaflets or notices, the occasional resort, in cases of severe language difficulty, to a professional interpreter or, more commonly, the use of an untrained intermediary who happens to speak the language of the client - rarely addresses other than the most dramatic instances of communication difficulty and is often not effective even in meeting those situations.

Nor do these strategies address another neglected but very disabling con-
sequence of limited ability in English. Few factors can so effectively trans-
form a person's total identity as an inability to speak the language of those
around him. In this situation achievement, intellect, fluency and literacy
in the person's own language, and even personality itself, may be obliterated -
at least in the perception of those with whom he is failing to communicate.
The effect of this, not only on actual communication but also on the relation-
ship between clients and welfare workers is a vital dynamic in service
delivery to immigrants .

The issue, therefore, of language and communication, even though the most
visible aspect of the immigrant experience, still tends to be mishandled in
terms of the failure of service systems and personnel to understand the
complexity and the variety of situations encountered and to provide adequately
for them. Any attempt to understand the interaction of immigrants with
welfare services must, therefore, begin with an analysis of the full range of
communication difficulties which might be encountered and of the means which
might be developed to overcome them.

2.   Culture

The current upsurge of interest in immigrants, and the increasing use of the
term "multiculturalism", has led to a growing awareness of the concept of
culture. However, in this awareness there are potential traps. All too often
popular understanding of culture is a superficial one; a stereotyping one;
and one which serves to divide communities rather than help build bridges of
understanding or sensitivity.

Culture is often understood as being an exotically different aspect of
national or ethnic behaviour: ethnic foods, costumes, music, dance, etc. As
such, it is easily understood, tolerated, and even enjoyed. The more relevant
and significant concept of culture, however, is one which is both more pro-
found and more limited. Culture, in the important sense, relates to the deep
aspects of individual and group life. It deals with attitudes, values and
assumptions about such universals as birth, illness, death, pain, understanding
of sex and family roles, of faith, divinity, luck, future, progress, misfortune
and the like. In this sense it is a deep and not easily understood facet of
individual and group identities.

Culture is also subject to many sorts of variation and, of course, to
personal interpretation, and for this reason it can be dangerously misleading
to assume that everyone of a certain ethnic group or immigrant background
shares and accepts a common and easily described cultural view. For
instance, a simplistic view of culture often views it - mistakenly - as
synonymous with nationality i.e. all Yugoslavs share the same culture.
Culture in fact arises out of ethnicity, rather than nationality, and many
nations embrace several or many ethnicities e.g. Switzerland, Yugoslavia,
Niu Gini. Likewise culture changes over time, so that the cultural pers-
pectives of modern Greece may, in significant ways, be different from those
which prevailed at the turn of the century. Most importantly, socio-economic
factors impinge on culture and in certain instances, carry with them their
own cultural dimensions. Throughout the world, village people hold in
common many experiences and attitudes not shared by their urban compatriots;
and it is interesting to speculate on whether a Spanish brain-surgeon would
find more common ground with an Australian brain-surgeon than with a Spanish
olive-grower.

While culture shapes many attitudes and perceptions, so too does individuality
and experience; and while many universal experiences have a cultural component,
there is also much that is common among people.

Culture also must not be seen as a phenomenon by which only immigrants are
affected, and from which Australian-born people are free. All groups are
part of a set of cultural functions; thus, in the instance of health workers,
it is important not only to develop a sensitivity to cultural factors shaping
the response of, say, Greeks, to health care or illness or death, but also
to recognize that other cultural factors shape the approaches of Australian-
born service deliverers and service systems. Our belief in the important
role of medication, for instance, is culturally shaped in just the same way
as is the belief of other people in the role of prayer or herbal treatment.

The concept of culture is, therefore, limited by the operation of other
factors, such as current and previous socio-economic status, adaptation to
Australian styles and, above all, individuality. Moreover, many commonalities
are found in the basics of human behaviour; apparent cultural differences
in the experience of grief or loss, for example, may obscure many feelings
and behaviours which are shared by different cultures.

3.   Experience and Knowledge

One of the dangers in using over-simplified understandings of the role of
culture is that such understandings can lead to stereotyping of immigrant
groups, superficial explanations of their apparent behaviour and a type of
"blaming the victim" in which the difficulties encountered by immigrants
are attributed to deep-seated and fairly immovable cultural traits in their
own behaviour. What is often overlooked in such understanding is that much
of the behaviour of immigrants in a new country is due not to culture but
to the much more straight-forward factor of their failure to understand
arrangements, procedures and assumptions in the new country. This failure
to understand is due simply to the fact that in the country of their origin
these arrangements and procedures were different, and that newcomers are
simply unfamiliar, uninformed, ignorant, about the arrangements here. What
is required, therefore, is a recognition that some of the assumptions which
are basic to dealing with relevant systems in this country may not be shared,
simply out of ignorance, by newcomers to a country; and that these newcomers
may be used to other arrangements - which are equally valid, effective and
well-established, especially if viewed in their proper socio-cultural
context.

Thus, for instance, if a migrant from an eastern European country proves
very reluctant to approach police or officials for assistance, this is not
necessarily indicative of a deep-seated resistance to authority or a streak
of criminality. It is more likely simply to reflect the very different
role which police have in authoritarian countries and accordingly the
different response of people to that role. To give another example, if
migrants do not avail themselves of health insurance, this does not necess-
arily reflect a profound element of fatalism in their personal make-up:
it may be nothing more than the fact that in the country from which they
have come there has been no similar system of health insurance and the
system operating here has never been adequately explained to them.

Often this difference of personal experience - rather than a cultural gap -
is the reason immigrants whose experiences in their country of origin are
very different from those which they in fact encounter in their new home may
find themselves confused and ineffective in their day-to-day dealings, and
may be - unfairly - perceived as 'problems' by service deliverers. For this
reason, too, newcomers may also become disenchanted with their country of

adoption, as a result of their false expectations, to the extent, not
uncommonly, of wishing to return to their homeland. Some refugees from the
Soviet Union, for instance, have found themselves surprised and dismayed
at the limited availability of pre-school care, the cost of medical treat-
ment, or the difficulty of obtaining work appropriate to their training and
experience.

In attempting to ensure that migrants have complete access to, and a proper
understanding of, welfare systems in our community, it is therefore important
to understand the starting assumptions or information with which migrants
will be approaching our arrangements. Often, attempts to encourage usage
of services assume a basic familiarity with those services which may not,
in fact, exist.

4.   Resettlement

One experience which is common to all immigrants is resettlement. All
immigrants have, by definition, come to Australia from another country. In
so doing, they have left their homes, their schools, their jobs, their
friends and families and had to begin again. The circumstances of their
resettlement will, of course, vary vastly; but its impact will always be felt.

Some people who chose to emigrate left an advantaged position and were able
to bring with them some of their advantage. Others were forced to emigrate
because of war, civil disorder, or poverty; many were, in fact, refugees.
Some people have been here only a few months, others may have been here for
forty years. Some have come alone without any friends or relatives to
assist them in the new country; others have come in large families or have
been met by extended families and effective supporting groups here. In all
instances, however, the fact and nature of their departure and resettlement
will have certain implications for their lives here, although the nature of
these implications will vary depending on the circumstances of their departure
and resettlement, and the length of their residence in Australia.

The sorts of implications which might arise, depending on these circumstances,
can be illustrated by a few examples, although in any specific situation
they will need to be understood with reference to that situation. So it is
likely that, for instance, an immigrant who has arrived only recently in
Australia from a situation of poverty, with little educational background,

will be more willing than most people to accept a job which may not really meet his personal inclinations or needs, which may be poorly paid, unattractive, unhealthy and inadequately protected. Such a person might also be likely to work overtime, might not be in a position to take advantage of English classes, might not make a well-considered choice of where to live. A migrant who has come to Australia as a refugee, not particularly wishing to settle in Australia, may show, for quite a few years, a degree of pre-occupation with circumstances in his country of origin and possibly a desire to return. An immigrant who has come from a country in which guest-working arrangements are common may approach his new life in Australia with some uncertainty as to its permanence and may place a high priority on sending money to relatives back home. An immigrant from a country which is already well represented in Australia may tend to settle within the community of his ethnic background, while an immigrant who has an extensive education in a technical area may move more readily into a milieu which is defined less by his ethnic or immigrant background than by his professional background.

Nor is it only the background and capacity of the immigrant which may vary and affect his fate in Australia. Circumstances in Australia also vary from place to place and time to time. An immigrant settling in a rural area will face different opportunities, obstacles and attitudes from those facing some-one arriving in a large city. A worker immigrating in the 1950s will have encountered employment opportunities very much unlike those currently available.

What is common, however, to this variety of behaviour and circumstance is that the fact of departure from country of origin and resettlement in a new country in some way is likely to impinge on the experiences, attitudes, approaches and needs of all immigrants. Moreover, the role of the "resettle-ment" effect will vary, not only according to the circumstance of the individual, but also in response to the stages of his own life history.

The effects of resettlement on a newly-arrived immigrant with regard to his choice of job, home and the like are fairly easy to recognize, and the Australian community does indeed show a certain sympathy to the pressures facing the newly-arrived immigrant. There is far less awareness, however, of the difficulty facing the refugee who has settled here but after some years shows guilt or anxiety at the fate of his friends or relatives in his country of origin; or the family which seeks to have its kin overseas join those who are in Australia, whether to provide the family already here with

practical and emotional support, or because of illness, age or isolation facing those remaining overseas.

Another issue which has quite rapidly surfaced in ethnic communities in recent times, and which again shows how the effects of resettlement may be played out over an entire lifetime, concerns the ageing immigrant. After maybe thirty years of established adaptation to Australia, many immigrants - now elderly - find themselves out of the workforce, no longer living with their families or children, and increasingly nostalgic, reflective, dependent and preoccupied with their past and their ethnicity. For such people, the fact of their resettlement remains relevant - indeed possibly of growing relevance - decades after their immigration occurred.

       *   *   *   *   *   *

The purpose of an analysis such as this is simply to identify with a little more precision the various components of the immigrant circumstance. It will become clear that for any individual person, some or all of these factors may play a part. In each instance, the specific configuration will vary. An immigrant from England may be unaffected by issues of language and communication, and only little affected by issues of culture. Issues of resettlement, however, may feature significantly in his situation. An immigrant from the Netherlands may face considerable issues with regard to language and communication, but cultural issues may not be especially important. A recent immigrant from Turkey or Vietnam will probably be affected by all the above issues.

As Australia's post-war immigration reaches into the second generation, we face a further issue which is relevant to this conceptualization. That is the issue of ethnicity. In the early post-war years, immigration was usually understood to be a matter affecting people who were born overseas and now lived here. Now, as significant numbers of people are born in Australia of those immigrants, we face the issue of ethnicity, that is, the situation of people who, while born in Australia, come from - and wish to retain, at least partially - an identity which is not necessarily Anglo-Australian. How the concept of ethnicity will develop in the future, and what bearing it will have on services, policies and attitudes, is only beginning to be understood. Certainly, however, it is a new and important

dimension, and one which complicates the approach that developed in the
past when it was wrongly assumed that questions of immigration were short-
term ones which would not persist more than one generation.

Finally there needs also to be repeated the important (if obvious) reminder
that not only does the particular configuration formed by the four aspects
of the immigrant identity vary from individual to individual, but that
the whole question of the relationship of that configuration to any
person's total identity remains problematic. That relationship is partly
determined by objective fact, and partly by the subjective self-identity
of the immigrant and the perception held of him by others.

In other words, as a matter of objective fact, the immigrant may also be
an unemployed worker, sick patient, an ill-treated wife, an elderly man -
or whatever; and it is this - as well as the immigrant identity - that
determines the nature of his dealings with the welfare system. In addition,
the immigrant may regard his immigrant identity as important or not, or as
related to his dealings with the welfare system or not; and that identity
may be perceived by the official dealing with him as relevant or not ...
A system with a too broadly - or too narrowly - developed sensitivity to
its multicultural clientele may distort its service to its clients as much
as a service which fails to recognize its multicultural clientele.

SECTION II - HOW SYSTEMS DEAL WITH IMMIGRANTS

One of the perennial dilemmas in any consideration of service provision to immigrants concerns the apparent need to choose between regarding immigrants as a special category with special needs, or regarding them as sharing the needs of their fellow citizens and not requiring special service arrangements. All too often debate about this is conducted as though one view were correct and the other incorrect. Those arguing for special arrangements for immigrants claim that in the absence of such arrangements immigrants receive a second-class service and are subject to assimilationist pressures; those contending that immigrants are best treated as part of a total population argue that only if this view is taken will mainstream services become properly sensitive to the diverse needs of their clientele. (Here again, parallels between debates in the immigrant field and in other welfare sectors can be seen. The debate about the proper basis of services for immigrants finds its counterpart in debates about, for instance, the physically disabled, about aboriginals, and the like).

Indeed, one of the issues which already seems to confront the Social Welfare Research Centre is this very debate. This present paper has been written in an attempt to guide the Centre through the process of deciding to either develop discrete research projects involving immigrants or, on the other hand, to deliberately choose to set aside such projects and include an awareness of immigrant issues in all its research projects. What follows is an attempt to map out a simple conceptual schema which may help identify more specifically the sorts of issues which service systems need to address with regard to immigrant needs and thereby indicate the sorts of arrangements which best meet those needs. This, in turn, may guide the Social Welfare Research Centre in its consideration of how immigrant issues may be incorporated into its work. Underlying this schema is a general contention that specific issues require specific arrangements, and that no general answer to the debate in the terms in which it was presented above is realistic. The framework below can be made more precise by being used in combination with the previous discussion on the various components of the immigrant circumstance. Its use will be illustrated by example.

The purpose of this framework is to identify the way in which immigrants interact with the welfare system, and to consider what light this interaction sheds on the question of how services are best delivered to immigrants in

any particular instance. A less theoretical way of stating the same is to suggest that we are looking at the problems which immigrants face in dealing with welfare services and the specific ways in which these problems might be overcome.

There appear to be three basic ways in which the immigrants' interaction with a system of welfare service may cause problems:

1.   Immigrants in their dealings with the system may encounter problems
      or issues which, in fact, are common to all people dealing with
      that system. These problems are, therefore, shared between
      immigrants and others and the immigrant dimension does not in
      any way affect the basic interaction.

2.   Immigrants, in dealing with a service system, may encounter problems
      which are, in fact, common to other people dealing with the
      system but which are intensified for immigrants by circumstances
      arising out of being an immigrant.

3.   There are situations in which immigrants, in dealing with a
      service system, face problems which are unique to them. They
      arise specifically out of the fact of being an immigrant and
      are not to any extent shared by non-immigrants in their dealings
      with the system.

To illustrate this, two examples of service systems will be used: firstly, the social security system, and secondly, child care. A similar analysis can be developed for other systems, e.g. employment, housing etc.

Example One: Social Security

Social Security Issues Common to the Entire Community

There are a great many problems which arise out of the social security system, and which affect many people. These are too common to require any elaboration, but can simply be noted in passing. Inadequate levels of benefit payment, limitations on appeal procedures, restrictions on eligibility criteria and the like are issues which arise out of many people's interactions with the social security system and which may affect them very severely . Such issues affect all people more or less equally and in many

instances immigrants are no more affected than others. Thus, if payment
levels are too low for the support of a family with no other income, the
consequences of this will affect all people in that situation regardless
of immigrant status. Poverty is poverty.

Issues Common to all but in which Immigrant Circumstance Intensifies Problems

Possibly the most common type of problem faced by immigrants arises out of
situations where aspects of a particular system cause many people problems
but where such problems are more likely, more acute, or more far-reaching
for immigrants, for reasons which arise quite identifiably out of the
immigrant circumstance and the failure of the system to make appropriate
adjustments or to show sufficient flexibility to cope with such circumstances.

In relation to social security issues, a very obvious example concerns the
whole issue of access, information and awareness. Problems arising out of
dealings with bureaucracies and out of complicated procedures are common-
place. Difficulties in face-to-face communication with counter clerks or
officials over complex matters are further intensified by many welfare
recipients' lack of knowledge of their rights and their entitlements, and
of the procedures which are available to them; for obvious reasons, however,
immigrants are far more likely to be affected by these difficulties or will
be more severely affected by them than others. Limited language ability
compounds these difficulties. Such difficulties limit immigrants' access
at the most practical level of their dealings with bureaucracies. They are
also likely to render them even more ignorant of their rights and may well
undermine confidence. It is in such ways as these that immigrants
encounter special disadvantages in dealing with the social security system.
The general nature or class of the difficulty is such that it is shared to
an extent by non-immigrants - e.g. a problem of access, or of communication,
or of understanding - but its specific form or degree is aggravated by
factors arising out of the immigrant circumstance - e.g. language, or
unfamiliarity with procedures.

At this stage in the present analysis, it becomes apparent that the
conceptualization of aspects of immigrant circumstance discussed in the
previous section of this paper can be related to this framework. Of the
four aspects of immigrant circumstance which can be distinctly identified,

the one which is most relevant here is that of language and communication. At other points, as will be seen, it is other aspects of the immigrant circumstance which interact with a service system to create a particular problem. What emerges from this conceptualization is a structured analytic key by which the nature and cause of a particular problem can be traced.

Another example of the same sort of analysis in the social security sector arises out of the range of issues within the workers' compensation area. Again, many people in the community are affected by lack of information and knowledge about the appropriate way of dealing with workers' compensation matters. Obviously, however, immigrants are more likely to be more ignorant of these issues. Here, again, to refer back to the earlier identification of aspects of immigrant circumstance, the issue is partly one arising out of language and communication, but it is also one which arises out of the basic familiarity with the system. In other words, someone may speak English well - indeed perfectly - but if he has come from a country in which workers' compensation procedures are entirely different he is unlikely to have an immediate grasp of the procedures or even the assumptions underlying them. Where, in addition, he does have a communication difficulty, he is doubly disadvantaged. The matter of workers' compensation and, in particular, its legal aspects, is a highly complicated one which causes many people difficulties. The immigrants' double disadvantage therefore occurs in a matter which is inherently complicated and problematic, and in which procedural difficulties affect even people who are not immigrants.

Another aspect of the workers' compensation system which again shows the various ways in which immigrants may be further disadvantaged in their dealings with it concerns the lump sum payment associated with the settlement of workers' compensation claims. In some countries the practice of making such payments is not known. For this and other reasons many people find it difficult to determine the best way of using a lump sum payment and may mis-spend it or not invest it wisely. It is not uncommon, for instance, for immigrants to use such payments to return to their country of origin for a visit. The reasons for this are entirely human and understandable. They may wish to take the last opportunity they will have to return home and see their friends and relatives; they may wish to seek a medical opinion from someone with whom they feel more affinity; they may wish to demonstrate to their relatives and friends that in spite of the injury they are not

entirely disabled. However, the use of a lump sum payment for this purpose may, in the long run, cause difficulties. Usually such payments are intended to be invested so as to provide continuing income; where they are spent over a short period of time, financial problems may well develop after return home.

In this example, all four aspects of the immigrant circumstance may play their part in bringing about this situation and in causing the intensification of the problem faced by immigrants in dealing with lump sum settlements. They may have chosen to deal with the payment in this way because their difficult-ies with language rendered it hard for them to understand the true nature of that payment and the fact that no further payments would be available. It may be their unfamiliarity with the system under which the payment was made which led them to act as they did. There may be a cultural issue related to, for instance, the need of a man injured at work to demonstrate to his friends or relatives that his role as a man and bread-winner has not been affected by his injury. The fact of resettlement may play a part in that someone who has only recently arrived in a country will clearly be far more torn between his old and his new country than someone who has been here for many years, and may, therefore, need to travel home in order to help make a final decision about his future. So in this instance, a range of factors associated with different aspects of the immigrant circumstance may all, individually or in combination, interact to cause immigrants intensified difficulties in dealing with this aspect of a service system.

The effect on a family of the injury of a worker is often considerable, but again for immigrants it is likely to be more so. In some communities, cultural perceptions of the role of the man as a husband, a father, and a bread-winner cause special trauma where injury renders these roles unable to be properly filled. The fact of resettlement may again play a part where, because of its newness in a country, a family is particularly dependent on the closeness and health of all its members. With few supports elsewhere in the community and weak links with the larger society, the impairment of the ability of one member of the family may mean that an injury in such a family has far more drastic effects than it would in a family which, because it was born in Australia, was able to find support elsewhere.

Again, the effects of injury on employment prospects affect most people but are likely to be exaggerated in their consequences for immigrants. An

Australian-born man who is fit only for light duties may well, at least in
times of high employment, be able to find such work. An immigrant, however,
is likely to be disadvantaged by his limited English language ability,
especially where light duties are more likely to require good English than
the factory work which he might have been doing in the past. Likewise, a
cultural background may dictate that some work which might be physically
acceptable is not culturally acceptable.

All the above problems arise from the range of situations encompassed by
industrial injury and the workers' compensation entitlements within our
social security system. Taken together, they indicate the sorts of ways in
which immigrants may face difficulties dealing with that system which,
though shared by other people, are aggravated for immigrants. In addition,
it is possible to ascertain the particular factors reflecting aspects of the
immigrant circumstance which cause that aggravation.

Yet another example, still in the context of industrial injury and the social
security system, is that of the invalid pension. In the first place,
immigrants are especially vulnerable to injury in the workplace because of
difficulties in understanding written or spoken instructions with regard to
safety procedures. They are also more likely to be working in injury-prone
occupations because their recent arrival in the country makes them less
aware of their rights and of the choices open to them, and makes them
especially vulnerable to exploitation. Any invalidity which an immigrant
may suffer either as a result of injury or illness may again be especially
disabling because of the sorts of cultural factors mentioned above, and
likewise because of the particular need for an immigrant to be fit which
arises out of his recent settlement in Australia.

Another aspect of this situation which is reflected in immigrants' dealings
with the social security system over invalid pensions concerns the special
vulnerability of the immigrant to middlemen and agents - people who, rightly
or wrongly, and in good conscience or not, claim to be able to assist
immigrants to obtain their rights under the system. Such people often cause
major difficulties for people on whose behalf they act, and they are far
more likely, of course, to be acting for immigrants. The recent so-called
"Greek Social Security conspiracy" case is a prime example of this. The
difficulties which this causes for immigrants again arises out of the

language difficulties which immigrants may face in dealing with the system
themselves and out of their lack of familiarity with the way in which the
system operates.

Social Security Issues Unique to Immigrants

It has been suggested so far that many of the problems encountered by
immigrants in their dealings with welfare systems, taking as an example the
social security system, are specific instances of larger problems which
affect others in their dealings with that system. The disadvantages
immigrants face as a result of their difficulties with language or their
failure to understand the system are only extreme versions of similar
difficulties faced by other people. By understanding immigrant problems in
this way, it becomes possible to understand those problems in the context
of the needs of the entire community rather than a residual atypical
minority, and to plan services accordingly.

However, there are some instances in which problems faced by immigrants are
indeed unique. These instances usually arise out of specific legislative
or programmatic provisions which single immigrants out in some way. In the
social security system, the two most obvious such instances concern main-
tenance guarantees and residential qualifications. Maintenance guarantees
arise out of the situation where a family, usually an immigrant family now
resident in Australia, wishes to sponsor a close relative to join them in
Australia. In order to do this, amongst other things, they must undertake
to guarantee that the newly arrived family will not become a charge on the
state and therefore will not need to claim normal social security entitle-
ments. Instead, the sponsoring family will meet any financial contingencies
which may arise. This system of maintenance guarantees has been strongly
criticized by many people in the welfare area: it is seen as being dis-
criminatory and as placing undue strains on both the sponsoring and the
sponsored family. It denies the immigrant family basic social security
rights accorded to all other Australians, and places on the sponsoring family
an obligation not shared by other families. It is, therefore, a specific
legislative provision which, for whatever reason, singles out immigrants and
places special conditions on them.

Related to this issue is that of residence qualifications. Residence
qualifications are the requirements that people live in Australia for
specific periods before they are entitled to certain pensions and benefits -

for example, generally ten years in the case of aged pensions. The Department of Social Security has estimated that some 26,000 people of pensionable age are excluded from receiving an aged pension on residence grounds, although this exclusion has no effect on 15,500 of those from Britain and New Zealand because of the comprehensive reciprocal pension agreements with those countries. To many immigrants these qualifications appear anomalous, if not discriminatory, and are seen as seeming to favour British immigrants over others, and Australian citizens over all immigrants. The issue becomes more complex when considered in the light of the reciprocal arrangements which have been negotiated between Australia and some countries for payment of pension s but not between Australia and many other countries. However, without exploring this in detail, it is another significant area in which specific arrangements affect immigrants in unique ways.

Without going further into these instances which were, in fact, mentioned and suggested for review in the Galbally Report into Migrant Services and Programmes, it is sufficient to use them to illustrate the ways in which, within a particular welfare system, problems faced uniquely by immigrants may arise or be created.

A far more intangible but nevertheless very potent aspect of the way in which services may affect immigrants in unique ways arises out of the attitudes held by service deliverers to immigrants. In many cases, these attitudes will be negative, ranging from outright prejudice and discrimination to, more commonly, misconceptions and emotive judgments often coloured by crude culturally-based stereotypes. Where these attitudes are held, service received by the immigrant - especially in a face-to-face situation - will be affected. It may simply mean that the immigrant receives short shrift, lack of attention, or is perceived in a caricatured or stereotyped way. Occasionally it might mean that the immigrant is, in fact, treated in a frankly hostile way. Usually, however, it will result in the immigrant receiving a less adequate level of attention than would be received by an Australian-born client. To be fair, in some instances, the situation may work in the immigrant's favour. There are certainly some people in any welfare system who are particularly aware of, and sympathetic to, the problems faced by immigrants and who will give more sensitive and concerned attention to the immigrant client.

The whole question of the way in which attitudes to immigrants affect the service they receive is only now being given some attention, usually in the form of the occasional "cultural awareness course" which the Galbally Report has gone some way towards initiating. However, the development of an integrated approach to the provision of services for immigrants at a face-to-face level, and the education of welfare workers in this, has gone no further than the parallel question of the integration of immigrant concerns into the planning and development of services. There is, therefore, little general understanding of the ways in which immigrants are affected by the perception held of them by service deliverers, even though this is as important a determinant of the quality of the welfare service received by immigrant clients as the more global question of policy and structure discussed above.

Example Two: Child Care

Child Care Issues Common to the Entire Community

As will already be evident, the categorization used in this scheme is not an especially tight or empirically rigorous one; rather it is a guide to developing an overall perspective. In some areas of welfare, difficulties occur which are so widespread in their range that they do not appear to reveal an immigrant/non-immigrant distinction - and yet, on closer analysis, they do cause greater problems for immigrants than for Australian-born citizens.

In the case of child care, the availability of child care facilities and the cost of child care is a matter of basic concern to a large part of the young working population whether or not of immigrant origin. However, inherent in the immigrant situation are several factors which make it likely that the high costs, or restricted availability of child care, will lead to immigrants encountering greater disadvantage than their non-immigrant counterpart. Accordingly, these basic issues are considered below, in the next category.

Issues Common to all but in which Immigrant Circumstance Intensifies Problems

The consequences of the high cost of child care are especially disabling for immigrants. Particularly during the establishment period of their first years of settlement, the expenses incurred by immigrant families exceed those of Australian-born families, so that they are less able to meet additional expenses. Similarly, because immigrant families, especially during the early period of settlement, are less likely to have access to alternative, non-institutional forms of child care - such as that provided by family, friends, neighbours etc. - the consequences of child care being either too costly, or simply unavailable will be more serious for them.

Economic pressures, employer practices and vulnerability to exploitation in the workplace often result in both parents of immigrant families working, frequently during early or late shifts, and some distance from their home. Extended child care outside normal day-time hours is very hard to find. The above-average proportion of immigrant families involved in shift work arrangements, and their limited access to informal means of child care, combine to confront immigrants seeking satisfactory child care with special obstacles. All the factors described above as causing immigrants special difficulties in obtaining adequate child care arise out of their resettlement circumstances (see page 10).

Other aspects of the immigrant circumstance also play a part in effecting the immigrants' experience of child care. For immigrants from non-English-speaking countries, lack of knowledge of available resources and appropriate procedures, combined with communication barriers, place further obstacles in the path of those seeking child care. Paradoxically, too, some of the more progressive community-based child care centres which emphasize the importance of community and parental participation in the management of centres may limit the usefulness of their facilities to immigrants. Differing cultural roles, language barriers, pressures of other activities, or lack of understanding of the system may well result in immigrant families experiencing more difficulties in making use of such facilities than they would with more conventionally-run child care centres.

Child Care Issues Unique to Immigrants

In a matter so close to the most fundamental practical and emotional concerns of family life as child care, issues arising out of language use

and cultural difference confront immigrants with types of problems not faced by other members of the community.

Where, as is almost invariably the case, an immigrant family cannot secure child care arrangements in which the staff speak the family's language, they face a range of overwhelming frustrations and anxieties. In the first instance, this arises out of the inability of the child care workers to communicate with the child's parents; in this situation, matters of mutual concern cannot be discussed, trust is difficult to establish, and child care becomes yet another manifestation of the family's powerlessness in the community in which it lives. But equally disturbing to many families - and confirmed by much of the research into early language development - is the effect on the child of losing the use of home language at such an early stage of socialisation. There is evidence to suggest that if the home language is cast into a residual role - in which it is only spoken at home - at the early pre-school years, the child may be handicapped in ever becoming proficient at that language, and his overall educational development may be impaired. Such evidence suggests that it may be better for children to spend the very earliest years of their language development in the language of their family, on the basis that as soon as they reach school they will have adequate opportunity to learn English. Certainly many parents hold this view and, certainly, too, most child care provision is unable to address the practical and emotional complexities involved.

The inability of most child care provision to meet different cultural standards throws up similar issues. Among the immigrant families wishing to use child care, there is likely to be a great range of different approaches to such basics as the role of men and women in dealing with children, the presentation of authority and control, interaction of boys and girls, types of play, dress and food, and so on. So fundamental are these issues that they present immigrants with challenges in child care unlike those faced by other Australians.

SECTION III: DETERMINANTS OF HOW SYSTEMS INTERACT WITH IMMIGRANTS

The preceding discussion - and indeed the whole of this paper - is based on
the over-riding assumption that the way in which any specific welfare
issue involving immigrants ought to be handled - whether at the research,
planning or delivery stage - is best determined by considering its special
place in the larger system in which it is located. In this way, the funda-
mental principle is established that immigrants are part of the total
community to which any welfare activity is directed, rather than a second-
class, peripheral minority; in this way, too, the larger systemic dimension
of any specific issue affecting immigrants is taken into account from the
outset.

The conceptual schema described here is, therefore, not an answer so much
as an analytic guide to those seeking directions in matters of immigrant
welfare.

So far this paper has considered two broad issues - first, the specific
components of the immigrant circumstance and, second, the ways in which
these circumstances interact with broad welfare systems in their effects
on immigrants. In this section the various ways in which service systems
respond to the preceding matters, and their determinants, will be con-
sidered.

a) basic orientation

One important determinant of the way in which service systems respond to,
and often shape, the immigrant's experience of welfare delivery is in
their *basic orientation to immigrant needs and circumstance*. This
orientation is not necessarily, or even often, conscious or explicit,
although it would be desirable that agencies and organizations give some
deliberate attention to it. The first and most common agency orientation
is that which might be described as *assimilative and universal*. In other
words, it is assimilative in that it assumes a mono-cultural system of
values, techniques and objectives to which those who are newcomers to the
country must adapt; and it is universal in that it is directed at all
people to whom its service is relevant, regardless of their ethnic back-
ground. Such an orientation, by definition, is unlikely to be sensitive
to immigrant needs, to develop specific approaches and strategies which
will accommodate problems in communication, differences in perception or

confusion as to goals, and may, in fact, be quite oppressive of immigrant
clients. Hopefully by now few statutory authorities are pure forms of
this type, as most of them have at least some minimal capacity to respond
to the difficulties immigrants may have with the English language; however,
as this is the only concession made to immigrant needs by many such
authorities, and as even this is rarely effectively implemented, it would
be true to say that many statutory and non-government authorities will tend
towards this type. Certainly there are very few authorities which show a
significant capacity to cope with ethnic differences at the level of
objectives and values.

The second orientation is that which can be described as *assimilative and
ethnic-targetted*. This orientation, like the first, does not allow for
different objectives and values in the service which it delivers, but it
is ethnic-targetted inasmuch as it recognizes that some of its clients may
be of a different background to the Anglo-Saxon "norm". In other words,
to some extent, such a service contains within it different strategies to
enable it to reach different people, but it requires them all to conform
to the same goals and objectives. Most statutory authorities would probably
be of this sort, although the extent to which they are ethnic-targetted is
usually very limited and confined to the fact that they may contain multi-
lingual literature and possibly bilingual staff or access to interpreters.
The Department of Social Security, Medibank, Commonwealth Employment
Service, are of this sort. Ultimately they provide all people with the
same service, that is, the same level of pension, the same type of job or
job-seeking system, the same health care provision. They do not recognize
different cultural values associated with health care, family roles or
employment, nor do they understand the different experience which the
clients may have of these in their countries of origin.

Though less obviously so, such an orientation is also likely to be oppress-
ive because, whilst showing some awareness of immigrant difference, it
ultimately requires all people to conform to the same objectives. However,
to the casual observer, such an orientation may seem to offer considerable
sensitivity to immigrants because it is aware of their different language
capacities.

The third orientation is that which can be described as *pluralist*. Such
an orientation would recognize immigrant difference, affirm the right of

immigrants and Australian-born clients alike to determine their own strategies and objectives, and work towards achieving the objectives chosen by any individual client in the light, at least partially, of his ethnic identity. There are probably no large-scale institutions or statutory authorities which conform to this description, although individual workers within them may seek to offer their clients some degree of choice. (Some community health centres are developing elements of such an approach). To be truly pluralist, a hospital would have to offer its patients comprehensive access to bilingual staff or at least interpreters, a choice of types of food, visiting arrangements and so on, and, more significantly, a range of medical and para-medical treatment which recognized non-Anglo-Saxon styles, different cultural values and experiences regarding such matters as family roles, herbal therapies, treatment only by staff of the same sex as the patient, and the like. A genuinely pluralist Commonwealth Employment Service would not take judgmental attitudes about, for instance, Turkish or Arabic claimants, would recognize the strain caused by migration on the family, especially on a bread-winner or adolescent, and would not be punitive in the event that a job suitable to the claimant's interest - as distinct from language capacity - could not be found. A pluralist Department of Social Security would show an understanding of the cultural imperative common in many communities to give absolute priority to the repayment of loans and would take this into consideration when making special benefit payments.

(Of course, pluralism would not always be attractive in its implications. Some cultural standards are not necessarily consistent with progressive welfare thinking. A genuinely pluralist Department of Social Security would, for instance, be under some pressure from some ethnic groups to decrease or even do away with payments to single mothers where their husbands felt that the breakup of the family had been at the initiative of the mother.)

Even at the non-government level, it is difficult to find many service agencies which are genuinely pluralist. Some personal counselling agencies may have a capacity to respond to the particular needs and values expressed by their clients; although here, too, many such agencies operate within a particular and fairly rigid value framework.

Finally, an agency orientation may be *ethnic*. This means that it is
consciously directed at the values and objectives associated with a
particular immigrant or ethnic identity. Such agencies are usually
associated with particular ethnic groups, and often offer the only hope
for an immigrant of receiving a service which in some way meets his needs.
These agencies, however, suffer many difficulties. They are often under-
resourced and inexperienced. They face a particular difficulty in
responding both to the particular ethnicity of their clients and the larger
constraints of a community which is generally not very sympathetic to that
ethnicity. Their own staff, as well as their clients, may feel acute
tensions and strains within their own identity. Almost by definition,
the orientation of an ethnic agency places it at odds with the larger
community and in a residual status. In some instances the larger community
may attempt to give an ethnic agency some particular and sympathetic
attention; however, as likely as not, this will largely be token and the
agency runs then the further risk of being manipulated or co-opted by the
larger community.

b) location

A second determinant of the way in which service systems respond to, and
often shape, the immigrant's experience of welfare delivery is in their
location within the larger welfare structure. Here the basic issue as far
as services which are sensitive to the needs of immigrants are concerned
is similar to that concerning any group with special needs; namely, are
services provided from within a universalist structure whose target is the
entire community or from within a separate and distinct structure whose
target is the special need group. In this country, most of the funda-
mental welfare services are delivered from within a universalist structure.
It tends to follow that - unless they specifically address this issue -
most such services will not have a high degree of specific responsiveness
to immigrant needs. By their very nature, services which are located
within universalist structures are likely to have an orientation which is
either assimilative and universal or, at best, assimilative and to some
degree ethnic-targetted. Services which are pluralist or ethnic are more
likely to be found in separate structures which are not associated with,
or have developed in reaction to, the larger universalist systems.
Typically, the difference is that between, for instance, the Department
of Social Security, a large general hospital or the Victorian Housing

Commission on the one hand and, on the other hand, the Australian Greek Welfare Society, Victorian Ethnic Child-care Co-operative, the Indo-Chinese Refugee Association, or the Ecumenical Migration Centre.

It is from within this basic pattern that services for immigrants are determined. Many people would argue that as long as this basic pattern continues, immigrants will, by definition, continue to receive a second-class residual welfare service from a society which has failed to recognize the implications of its multiculturalism. Certainly, there are significant issues to be explored. The whole question of whether services to immigrants should be delivered from within universalist or specifically ethnic structures is one of some controversy. The very concept of specific ethnic structures remains unclear. This has been demonstrated fairly recently, for instance, by the Galbally Report's proposal for Migrant Resource Centres and the difficulties experienced in implementing that proposal. One of the basic confusions in such arrangements concerns whether such ethnic welfare structures are to be concerned with one particular ethnic group, or whether they can be multi-ethnic.   This latter seems to have been the idea envisaged by the Galbally proposals; it has, however, proved extremely difficult to implement, and often appears to mean little more than the old concept of 'New Australians' as people who, because of their non-Anglo-Saxon origin, can therefore be dealt with under one category. The purpose, target, strategy and organization of such structures remain to be properly explored in our community.

Arising out of this largely overlooked issue of the effect of the structure and location of a welfare system on its service to immigrants, there can be posed for any type of welfare activity a series of questions which might determine the appropriate system structure. Should immigrants be served from within the universalist structure relevant to their overall needs, or by a separate structure? If the former, for what reason, and with what orientation? How is it to operate? If the latter, why? Where a separate ethnic-specific structure does seem preferable, should it be established and financially supported by its parent universalist system either on a contractual or secondment basis, or should it be an entirely independent structure, funded by, and accountable to, an ethnic community?

Usually, in our community, the options are fairly polarized. Most services which are ultimately the responsibility of statutory universalist

structures are not transferred in any way at all to ethnic specific structures. The Department of Social Security, for instance, functions almost exclusively only through its own regional offices. The Welfare Rights Programme was, however, an interesting and exceptional example in which ethnic structures, which were independent in origin, were given financial support to perform an outreach function for the larger structure. Ethnic child care workers, funded by the Office of Child Care, perform similar roles. The grant-in-aid arrangements of the Commonwealth Department of Immigration also provide some opportunities for ethnic groups or other pluralist agencies to develop their own service systems with the support of a government department. Rarely, however, does systematic thought seem to be given to the way in which the specific functions of universal welfare structures can be made available to ethnic groups through ethnic specific structures.

Again, at this point it must be stressed that underlying this paper is the belief that there are no general answers to questions of services for immigrants; rather, options in terms of service orientation, service location etc. should be clarified and their implications understood so that any particular sector which is being considered by the Social Welfare Research Centre can retain within that consideration an understanding of the issues relevant to immigrants.

c)   working methods

Alongside the orientation and location of welfare systems, a third determinant of the way in which systems respond to immigrant needs is their *day-to-day operation and working methods*. Without the operational capacity to work effectively with immigrant clients, a philosophy sympathetic to multiculturalism may be of little consequence. A considerable range of issues is relevant here, and many of them have been neglected in welfare to date.

The nature of the particular working methods which need be considered will vary to some extent depending on whether the system is basically a personal service system or a planning and policy-making system. Within a personal service system, the chief areas which will affect the nature of the service provided for immigrants are the following:

First, the type of personnel employed. The nature of recruitment and training will in part determine the capacity of a personal service system to respond to immigrants. The use made of non-Anglo-Saxon staff, staff with a bilingual capacity, interpreters and the like is probably the single most significant variable. Where a diversity of staff is available, their role and deployment become critical. One of the issues currently of greatest concern to agencies in which such staff are available concerns the role of interpreters, ethnic workers, ethnic aides and the like, along-side Anglo-Australian staff who tend still to have more formal professional training and positions of greater influence within agencies, but, in some settings, a diminishing legitimacy or credibility. Role conflict between Anglo-Australian and ethnic staff, role strain and role confusion within ethnic staff, uncertain perceptions on the part of clients, are highly troubling and contentious issues in many such agencies. Extremely little research or consideration has been given to these questions, however.

Second, the styles and techniques of direct worker-client interaction are significant influences on the nature of the services. Related to this is the place of cultural knowledge. There is a growing tendency amongst workers in the welfare field to be aware of the importance of cultural knowledge; however, within this increasing sensitivity, there is the risk, referred to earlier in this paper, that cultural knowledge of a limited degree will produce rigid stereotyped thinking rather than a genuine capacity to integrate cultural knowledge into other considerations, especially those dealing with resettlement issues. The way in which agencies and staff are responding to the issues of cultural sensitivity is therefore a key concern in the present period.

Third, the communication strategies utilized by agencies in their direct work with clients critically affect their ability to provide effective services to immigrants. The awareness of the role and availability of interpreters, skill in using interpreters, understanding of the effects of using interpreters on the dynamics of interviews and casework, knowledge and capacity to provide alternative communication strategies are vital considerations. In the past, these matters have almost entirely been neglected and often a partial awareness of the need for communication strategies has resulted in further problems, such as where children or untrained people are used to provide interpreting functions. An investigation, therefore, of the way in which agencies develop communication

strategies for their immigrant clients is a vital criterion for assessing their service to immigrants.

Fourth, the way in which agencies seek to establish their client market and make their services known is an aspect of their overall responsiveness to immigrants which is easily overlooked. Agencies often complain that the whole question of immigrants is not relevant to them because they have no immigrant clientele. Often this reflects not a lack of need but a failure of the agency to demonstrate to immigrants that the agency offers a service which can be of use. The extent to which immigrants use agencies is a powerful indication of the extent to which those agencies have incorporated an awareness of immigrant need in their operation.

For agencies whose emphasis is on planning and policy-making rather than personal service, some of the foregoing considerations may be relatively less important than some others. However, the question of recruitment, training, deployment and role of ethnic personnel would apply to such agencies with equal force. The chief difference with planning and policy-making agencies may be that their accountability to their clients and within them to immigrants will be less obvious. A personal service agency which fails to meet the needs of its immigrant clients will probably be confronted with this failure fairly evidently through the reaction of the individual client. In agencies whose relationship with the client group is more attenuated or less visible, the accountability issue will be harder to acknowledge. A key issue, therefore, determining the response of such agencies to immigrant needs will be the nature of their decision-making processes and, within those processes, the role given to immigrant or ethnic representation. This is a matter of special interest to immigrant communities, and one which often generates a good deal of fairly emotive dispute.

Quite understandably, it is often felt that if such agencies are to adequately consider immigrant issues within their programme, immigrants (or "ethnics") must be represented in their decision-making and policy development level. The question, however, immediately arises as to how this representation is best secured. The problem is that there is no easily-defined immigrant constituency. As has been argued throughout this paper, the immigrant constituency encompasses an enormous diversity of experience

and circumstance in terms of culture, background, nature of immigration, settlement patterns in Australia and so on. Where accountability has to be secured through an indirect means as distinct from a one-to-one encounter with the immigrant client, it is extraordinarily difficult to envisage how one person, or several people, can make the necessary representative link. Can one immigrant be taken to represent the immigrant or ethnic constituency? Do different ethnic groups need to be represented individually? Do people from different waves of immigration need to be represented individually? Is it preferable to be represented by people who are themselves immigrants, or by people who are of immediate immigrant origin, but themselves Australian-born and can perform bridging functions? How many people need to be represented so that such representation is more than token?

Nor is it at all clear whether the presence of immigrants at such levels is any guarantee that immigrant issues will be considered - or properly understood. Those selected may be accountable to a somewhat specific ethnic constituency to which they may bear a rather political relationship. Alternately, their choice by the agency may involve a process of manipulation, tokenism or co-option, or place the representative under some strain. The chosen representative may have no special competence or understanding. Ultimately, it may be that a properly understood and accepted view, shared by the entire agency staff, of an integrated place for immigrant concerns in the agency's total operation, may be more effective than a formal structure of immigrant representation. Certainly the employment of immigrants among the agency's staff, and consultation by the staff with other immigrant workers in the field, is likely to be a more significant influence on the day-to-day effectiveness of an agency's work with its immigrant clients. However, immigrant representation may remain important for symbolic as well as substantial reasons.

SECTION IV: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has been written as a background paper for the Social Welfare
Research Centre in order to raise questions of ethnicity as they relate to
the Centre's research programme.   I have not seen it as my brief to
suggest topics, and the comments here are made largely in ignorance of the
overall way in which the research directions for the Centre are being
established.   I have, therefore, sought instead to suggest some ideas and
develop a conceptual framework by which the Centre may be guided in its
own decision-making.

The framework which it seems to me might be useful is one which:

a. Identifies the aspects of immigrant circumstance with some
    precision so that it becomes meaningful to talk about immigrant
    problems and identify the relevant variables;

b. Sets out a general typology of ways in which these aspects of
    the immigrant circumstance may interact with larger systems
    of whatever nature;

c. Suggests those aspects of the orientation, location and
    operation of a service system which may affect the interaction
    between it and its clients.

In considering what this might mean for the specific research directions
of the Centre, the following possibilities appear:

1. A rather ambitious and comprehensive task would be for the Centre
    to explore in some detail the pattern suggested in this paper and,
    by reference to empirical examples in various welfare sectors, to
    attempt to confirm or fill out the linkages which are suggested
    here between the immigrant circumstance, nature of system and
    interaction with system. This task could either be done at a
    fairly abstract and conceptual level in the way presented here,
    or, through being applied in some detail and through a process of
    research monitoring and consultation, to actual welfare systems,
    in the way which has been briefly attempted by way of example with
    the social security and child care systems.

2. A somewhat more modest but deeper analysis of the above conceptualization might involve examining only specific components of the overall pattern suggested. Thus the role of communication difficulties or cultural difference in a range of services might be examined. Alternately, the place of pluralist or ethnic structures across a range of service systems might be studied. There is quite a vast number of questions of some importance which could be examined, and applying them across different service systems would certainly yield some important comparative material.

3. The material above might be used as an overall framework to be utilized as part of any substantive area of study taken on by the Centre, no matter what its overall origin and purpose. In other words, if it is determined, for whatever reason, that public housing, pre-school facilities, women's refuges, family allowances or whatever are to be studied, the use of this framework in the way suggested earlier might assist in ensuring that the ways in which these issues are relevant to immigrants are examined in the course of that study. Indeed, it would probably be in accord with the overall argument of this paper to suggest that this approach might be the most fruitful one, as it ensures that immigrant issues are not given a residual or isolated status, but are integrated with the overall welfare concerns of the Centre. A firm policy decision to take this approach throughout all studies to be conducted by the Centre might also be of some assistance in resolving the problem which already confronts the Centre, and which has been discussed above, of how immigrant and ethnic representation is best incorporated into the decision-making structure of the Centre itself. A clear, defined and visible commitment to the systematic incorporation of issues of concern to immigrants in all spheres of the Centre's programme might make the need for such representation at a very conspicuous level a little less urgent, and might therefore create an overall context in which more flexible approaches to dealing with this issue can be considered.

4. The Centre could take on within its research projects the

specific investigation of particular immigrant problems in
dealing with welfare. There are, of course, countless numbers of
these. There are frequently described and analyzed and there
is also, at least in some instances, a considerable amount of
research data available. While it is important that any
problems faced by immigrants should be acknowledged and understood,
it might be preferable that they no longer be studied in isolated
ways, but rather integrated into wider concerns as the earlier
options presented here would suggest. However, there is a role
for the study of particular immigrant problems inasmuch as
their study is the first step to dealing with them, and can
then be integrated into the wider frameworks suggested above.

Some immediate issues of pressing concern in this context
include:

- the effect of current immigration law, with regard to
  family reunion policy, deportation practices and/or appeal
  procedures, on immigrant settlement and welfare;

- the implications of the ageing of the immigrant population
  for services for the elderly, family life etc.;

- the combined effects of residence qualification for
  eligibility for pensions, of maintenance guarantees,
  and of the withdrawal of tax rebates for payments made
  to relatives overseas;

- the experiences of agencies employing ethnic workers and
  aides, and the nature of client response;

- the use of child care facilities by immigrants;

- the whole field of workers' compensation;

- the role of informal welfare workers and networks;

- the effect of 'cultural awareness' courses for welfare
  workers on agency and services, and the nature of client
  response;

- the personal counselling services available to immigrants
  facing marital problems, intergenerational family conflicts
  etc.

- the effectiveness of rehabilitation services for
  immigrants suffering industrial - or other - injuries.

DIAGRAMMATIC SUMMARY : Social Security

Common to entire community

- levels of benefits
- limited appeal procedures
- restriction on eligibility

Common to all but special circumstances affecting immigrants

- access, information and awareness
  - . due to language and communication difficulties
    at face-to-face and documentation level   (L & C)*

- workers' compensation
  - . lack of information and knowledge   (L & C)
                                                          (E   )

  - . use of lump sum to return home   (L & C)
                                                          (E   )
                                                          (C   )
                                                          (R   )

  - . effect on family   (C   )
                                                          (R   )

  - . employment prospects limited   (L & C)
                                                          (C   )

- invalid pension
  - . special vulnerability of immigrants to
    injury and to injury-prone employment   (L & C)
                                                          (R   )

  - . disabling effect of invalidity   (C   )
                                                          (R   )

  - . vulnerability to middlemen and agents   (L & C)
                                                          (E   )

Distinctive to immigrants

- maintenance guarantees
- eligibility criteria
- reciprocity

* L & C = language and communication factors
      C = cultural factors
      E = experience factors
      R = resettlement factors

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There is a vast amount of literature available on many of the issues
discussed in this paper; at the same time, there are many gaps and
deficiencies in that material.

For any serious consideration of any of these issues, reference to
the holdings of the Clearing House on Migration Issues (CHOMI) is
essential.

- The Stocklist of the CHOMI lists, under a range of topics,
  several hundred items, published or reprinted by the
  CHOMI, and available for purchase.

- More extensive, and regularly up-dated, listings of
  relevant Australian and overseas literature, including
  its availability and location, can be found in CHOMI's
  annotated accessions list, Documentation and Abstracts
  Service.

- Several Bibliographies have been published by CHOMI:
  of special relevance is
  No.8: Welfare: Practice and Education, Culture and Ethnicity.

An especially useful critical review of recent, local documentation
on immigrant welfare is contained in "It's Not the Thought That Counts
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