

A close-up photograph of two young children. The child on the left is a white boy with light skin and blue eyes, wearing a dark blue hooded garment, sticking his tongue out. The child on the right is a Black girl with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a pink hat with a white band and a white ruffled shirt, smiling broadly. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

# Rethinking Images of Inclusion

A Picture Book for Children's Services

Miriam Giugni



The ACT PSC is managed by Communities@Work.  
The Australian Government funds the Professional Support Coordinator initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

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co-researches.

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**Focus Group:**

- Gungahlin Regional Community Services – Out of School Hours Care
- YWCA Family Day Care
- The Park School for Early Learning
- Ngunnawal Child Care and Education Centre





## Introduction

When you see the word 'inclusion' what does it mean to you? How do you go about planning for inclusion and inclusive practises? How do you make your spaces inclusive? How do you represent inclusion and inclusive practises in your setting?

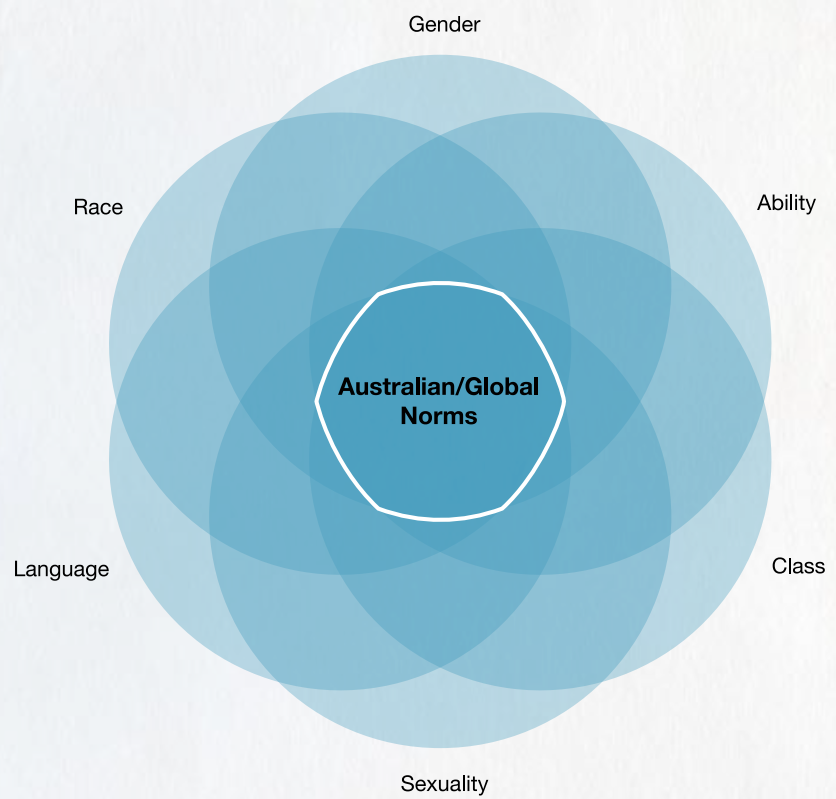
This book engages these questions to help us rethink how inclusion is understood and practised in our everyday work in children's services.

The images of inclusion presented in this book are designed to motivate your thinking about who is included and how they are represented. The images are intended to encourage you to think about how you can 'read' inclusion. The following questions might be a starting point for discussion about how you can think differently about inclusion.

- What are your first impressions of these pictures?
- What are some ways you could think about these pictures as an image of inclusion?
- What are some of the ways you could think about these pictures as a way to think about equity?
- What are some of the ways you could think about how these images can prompt you to think through your own biases about difference?
- How might you talk about these images in a way that constructs the children as powerful?
- How might you talk about these images in a way that constructs children in a broader social and community context?

## Image of Inclusion

Have you ever thought about how we use the term inclusion to guide our everyday practises? Who is inclusion for? Inclusion into what?





## Language of Inclusion

Often the language of inclusion and the way we use it can give the impression that there are some people who require inclusion and others who may not.

The stories and images in this book are an attempt to shift our thinking about inclusion in a way that encourages us to think that everyone needs to be included.

One way that we can begin to think about inclusion differently is to use different words. For example, what if instead of using the term 'children with disabilities' we used the term 'diverse abilities' (Giugni, Montero, Da Silva, 2005) to describe everyone in your service? By using the term 'diverse abilities' we can begin to see that each and every person is different and this has social effects. So you wouldn't use the term diverse abilities to describe an individual child or adult (e.g. the child has diverse abilities); rather, you use it to describe all of the people in the group at any given time (e.g. people in our centre have diverse and different abilities). Of course, it is not enough just to establish that people have diverse and different abilities because being different can mean that you experience exclusion and discrimination. So, another benefit of using the term 'diverse

abilities' is that the discrimination that often accompanies difference can be thought about and challenged by rethinking our everyday language of inclusion.

Take this quote as an example:

"...I do not experience my being autistic as being 'disordered' or 'impaired', so much as I experience it as being dis-abled in a world that doesn't understand autism."

*Wendy Lawson (2001, p.12)*

Wendy Lawson's experience of difference is not her 'being autistic' but the way we have come to think about and understand what we do with people who have autism and how we 'include' them. The effect of this is that we have come to think about and understand inclusion as a practice that includes people who are not perceived to be 'normal' into an experience of being as normal as possible. We have come to understand inclusion as a practice that includes people who are perceived to be 'different' into an experience of being the same.

***So the term 'diverse abilities' includes you!***

“...I do not experience my being autistic as being ‘disordered’ or ‘impaired’, so much as I experience it as being dis-abled in a world that doesn’t understand autism.”

*Wendy Lawson (2001, p.12)*

## Social Differences

Differences between people can be identified through social categories that include, but are not limited to:

- Age (childhood, adulthood, teenager, elderly)
- Gender (femininity, masculinity)
- Skin colour (also eye and hair colour and texture)
- Ethnicity
- Race
- Sexuality (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual)
- Language (monolingual, bilingual, multilingual)
- Abilities
- Geographical region
- Class (working class, middle class)
- Socio-economics
- Migrant
- Spirituality
- Religion

Think about your identity, how many of these social categories do you identify with? What social categories are missing that reflect your identity?

## Multiple Realities

Another list of identities to consider are those that describe the reality of how you live in the world. Martin (2008) calls these 'multiple realities'. This also includes the multiple relationships we have with all of the different people in our lives that might include:

- Educator
- Teacher
- Carer
- Parent
- Aunty
- Grandmother
- Mechanic
- Doctor
- Activist
- Politician

The list could go on and on!



“...at the same time we are different we are similar.”

## Similarities and Differences

In the same way that we can identify differences in our diverse abilities, and multiple realities, we can identify similarities. For example, children may share some parts of their identities such as gender, but differ in terms of skin colour or religion. Or they may share ethnicity but differ in terms of gender. The combinations of differences and similarities are multiple.

So, at the same time we are different we are similar. But being similar does not overtake our differences. Sometimes our differences are more important than our similarities; at other times our similarities can seem more important than our differences. And we can be similar and different at the same time. This can also depend upon the relationships we are in at any time.

If we return to Wendy Lawson as an example, she has identified herself as 'being autistic'. At the same time as she is 'being autistic' she is also a woman, an author, a poet, a teacher and part of the community in her own right.

- Think of your own identities
- Consider the differences and similarities between you and the people in your service (children, families and educators)
- Think about the times when your differences are important to you and others
- Think about the times when your similarities are important to you and others
- Consider how you might rethink how you see yourself and others as always different and similar at the same time.







## Our Identities

Sometimes we identify with one part of our identity more than our other identities. This can change depending on where we are, who we are with and what we are doing. For example, think about the relationships you have in your family context and compare them to the relationships you have in your work place. Similarly, compare them to the relationships you have when you go shopping, and compare them with your relationships with friends. Often when we meet new people one of the first questions is 'what do you do for a living?' This is one example of how the work we do gives us a social identity, one of our many 'multiple realities' (Martin, 2008).

The language we use to talk about inclusion is powerful because it reaches into the very heart of who we are and who we can become in our social contexts. The language of inclusion sets out our multiple realities (Martin, 2008). On the one hand it helps us feel like we belong, but at the same time it can also mean that we can experience exclusion.



## The Language of Exclusion

Have you ever thought about why we see bilingual and multilingual people as Non English Speaking Background (NESB)?

Srinivasan (2008), a multilingual early childhood teacher, took a postcolonial perspective to look at some of the terms that are used to identify cultural groups. Not only did she examine them for how they discriminated against some groups and in favour of others, but she cleverly renamed them to better represent the effects they had on LOTE and CALD communities.

Instead of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Srinivasan (2008, p.2) renamed it:

### **Languages Othered By English (LOBE)**

This is an alternative to Languages Other Than English (LOTE). LOBE acknowledges that LOTE 'others' every language except English. Such linguistic 'othering' doesn't just happen of its own accord or through a natural process: it is a deliberate

strategy through which the dominant linguistic/cultural group maintains its dominance.

Instead of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), Srinivasan (2008, p.2) renamed it:

### **Culturally and Linguistically Identified (CALI)**

This is an alternative to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD). CALI acknowledges that CALD implies Anglo-Celtic cultures as the invisible cultural centre; and that as it does so, it marginalises every other culture as diverse or different. Such cultural 'othering' doesn't just happen of its own accord or through a natural process: it is a deliberate strategy through which the dominant linguistic/cultural group maintains its dominance (Mills, 2004). In contrast, CALI points to the invisible and anonymous dominant group as the perpetrator of this cultural 'othering'.

(Srinivasan, 2008, p.2)

“...cultural 'othering' doesn't just happen of its own accord or through a natural process...”

“...the change we need to make is to our own ways of thinking, acting and living that produce the effects of difference.”

## Rethinking Inclusion

Srinivasan's (2008) renaming challenges us to rethink inclusion. This does not mean that we question our good intentions or our commitment to equity and social justice, but to consider the way in which the language of inclusion can often result in exclusion instead.

Discrimination is not the effect of people being different, but the way that society is structured that gives the impression that there are 'normal' ways of being. Difference is then measured against these perceived normal ways of being and judged as a result.

So, to some degree, the change we need to make is to our own ways of thinking, acting and living that produce the effects of difference.

We like to think that we are inclusive and we work hard to do so. At the

same time, how many times do we say that we include people of all differences? And then ask how many of us would accept ourselves as the identities we are working hard to include such as: fat, amputated, quadriplegic, Downs, hairy, non-English speaking, bisexual. We struggle with this because we are happy to include people who are different when we do not experience the discrimination that goes with that kind of difference. We struggle with this because it challenges our perceptions of inclusion and ourselves as inclusive. We struggle with this because we don't want to see ourselves in any of these ways because what is perceived as normal is powerful and acts to convince us that we should be normal too. Furthermore, the power of normal works on us in a way that asks us to 'include' others into being normal too.



## Thinking Differently

So ask yourself – does inclusion mean including the individual child into what already exists in order for the child to fit in, or does it mean rethinking how the individual child is perceived in society that constructs her/him as different? If the latter is the case, then dealing with discrimination becomes an approach to inclusion that recognises differences and the inequality that can accompany them. Our job then is to consider how we can:

- Think differently about representing inclusive practises in social groups
- Think differently about inclusive practises in social groups rather than just with the individual child
- Think differently about understanding inclusive practises in social groups rather than just with the individual child









## Inclusive Practises and Approaches to Curriculum and Pedagogy

- How do you engage inclusive practises as part of your everyday experiences in your service?
- Are they different from your usual practises? Why? How?
- What are some ways you might be able to rethink all of your everyday practises as inclusive?

Engaging curriculum and pedagogy that is focused on inclusion, diversity and difference can be an everyday experience. It is easy to think that working with inclusion, diversity and difference is about including those who are different, but as we have established, everyone's different. If we take this idea that everyone is different as a starting point for curriculum and pedagogy, then what seems ordinary and everyday can be rethought as an experience

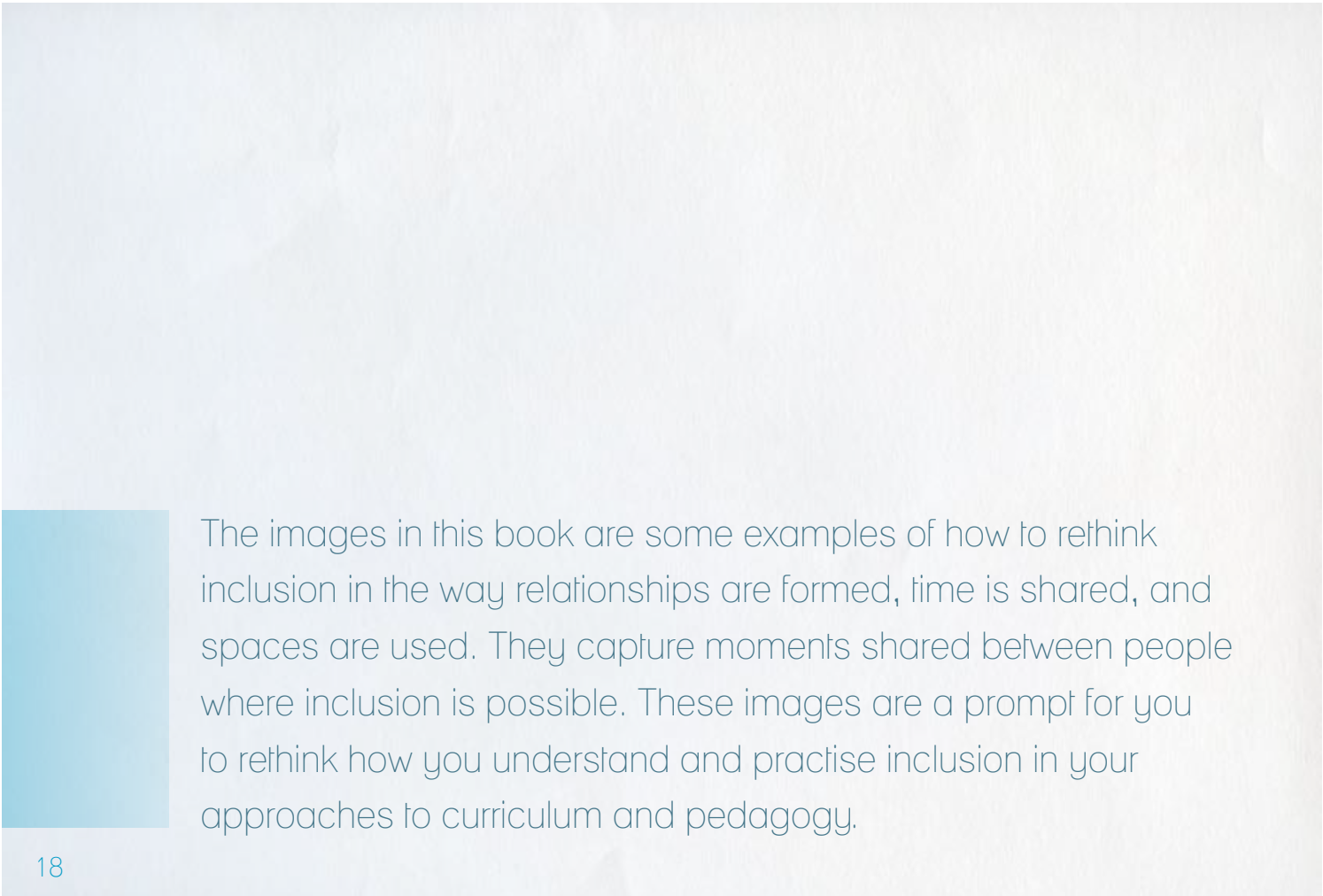
of engaging with difference as an approach to curriculum.

Beginning with difference means considering the relationships, connections, emotional entanglements, connectedness, struggles, joys, intensities and responsibilities of being with the children, families and educators in your service. So your approaches to curriculum and pedagogy are built on being together with a view to enabling different experiences for different people all at the same time.

This way of thinking means that the experiences, observations, documentation, physical environment and resources that you use and engage with on a daily basis are all part of rethinking inclusion in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Inclusion is not separate from everyday life in

a children's service, just as exclusion can so easily be part of everyday life in a children's service. Because different people have different needs, wants and wishes, your curriculum approaches can reflect this. At the same time, remember that the needs, wants and wishes that children have can be shared. Providing a curriculum that engages the notion of difference is not simply meeting individual children's needs, but is also instrumental in encouraging an everyday practise that seeks equity in how difference is represented and inclusion is practised.

Sometimes exclusion occurs between children in their friendship groups, but it can also be the result of our approaches to curriculum and pedagogy. This is tricky because sometimes when we intend to include, we can also exclude.



The images in this book are some examples of how to rethink inclusion in the way relationships are formed, time is shared, and spaces are used. They capture moments shared between people where inclusion is possible. These images are a prompt for you to rethink how you understand and practise inclusion in your approaches to curriculum and pedagogy.



“Remember that every person has many different identities, so creating resources that capture all of the identities and differences is complex.”

## Critique of Resources

If inclusion is about relationships, time shared and engagement in everyday moments, then more questions are important to ask about how resources are used to practise and live inclusion. For example, often we rely on a resource library for equipment that highlights difference (such as dolls with different skin colour, wheelchairs, hearing aids and flags etc). Representations of all kinds of difference are important, but if we are rethinking inclusion, then we also need to rethink what resources we use, how and why. So ask yourself:

- What resources do I use to promote inclusion and difference?
- How do I use them?
- How are they part of my relationships with children, families and educators?
- Will these resources enable children to have a better understanding of difference and inclusion?

Richard Johnson (2005) has rethought how resources are designed and used in play, questioning the extent to which they accurately represent

cultures (remember that culture includes diverse abilities). Remember that every person has many different identities, so creating resources that capture all of the identities and differences is complex.

A part of rethinking the use of resources is an opportunity to consider how and to what extent we can 'know' another culture outside our own. If we can't 'know' another culture that we do not live, what are the implications of 'including it'? Derman-Sparks (1989, 2008) and Dau (2001) have reminded us for many years to be cautious about our approaches to including cultures. While they strongly recommend that there be representation and visibility of diversity and difference, they caution early childhood educators not to fall into the trap of 'tourist curriculum' approaches. Rethinking inclusion means considering how willing you are to learn new ways of understanding culture and recognising that there are always new things to learn about the many identities and differences of the people in your centre communities.





## Photography and Ethical Practise

Using photography has become a popular practise in children's services. The benefits of using images of children, families and educators in meaningful ways enable that might include:

- a way to make children's learning visible
- a way to show glimpses of the relationships between people
- having a record of experiences to revisit with children, families or for your own reflective practise

At the same time, using photography can also be problematic in terms of ethics. Consider these questions:

- Do you seek children's permission to photograph them? If so how?
- If you interrupt children to ask for permission to photograph is the moment still an authentic learning moment?

- How do you ask children under 2 years for permission to be photographed?
- What if children change their minds about being in a photograph?
- Which experiences/ideas/issues are represented in photographs and which are invisible?
- What would your daily experience feel like if people took your photograph while you were working?

There are many more questions you can ask about using photography ethically. These questions are not asking you not to take photographs – after all this is a picture book full of photographs! Instead these questions are here to help you think about the benefits as well as the drawbacks of using them.

The photographs in this book are used to try to illustrate new and different ways of thinking about inclusion. We think that by offering some possible examples that the photographs might 'speak' to you in new ways. At the same time, the photographs in this book can be 'read' in lots of different ways. So using photography here is to help promote educators to rethink inclusion in order to contribute to a more equitable world. The photographs enable this thinking by encouraging you to recognise that the intensity of your relationships with children, families and educators can form new understanding of how we practise inclusion on a daily basis.





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## Further reading

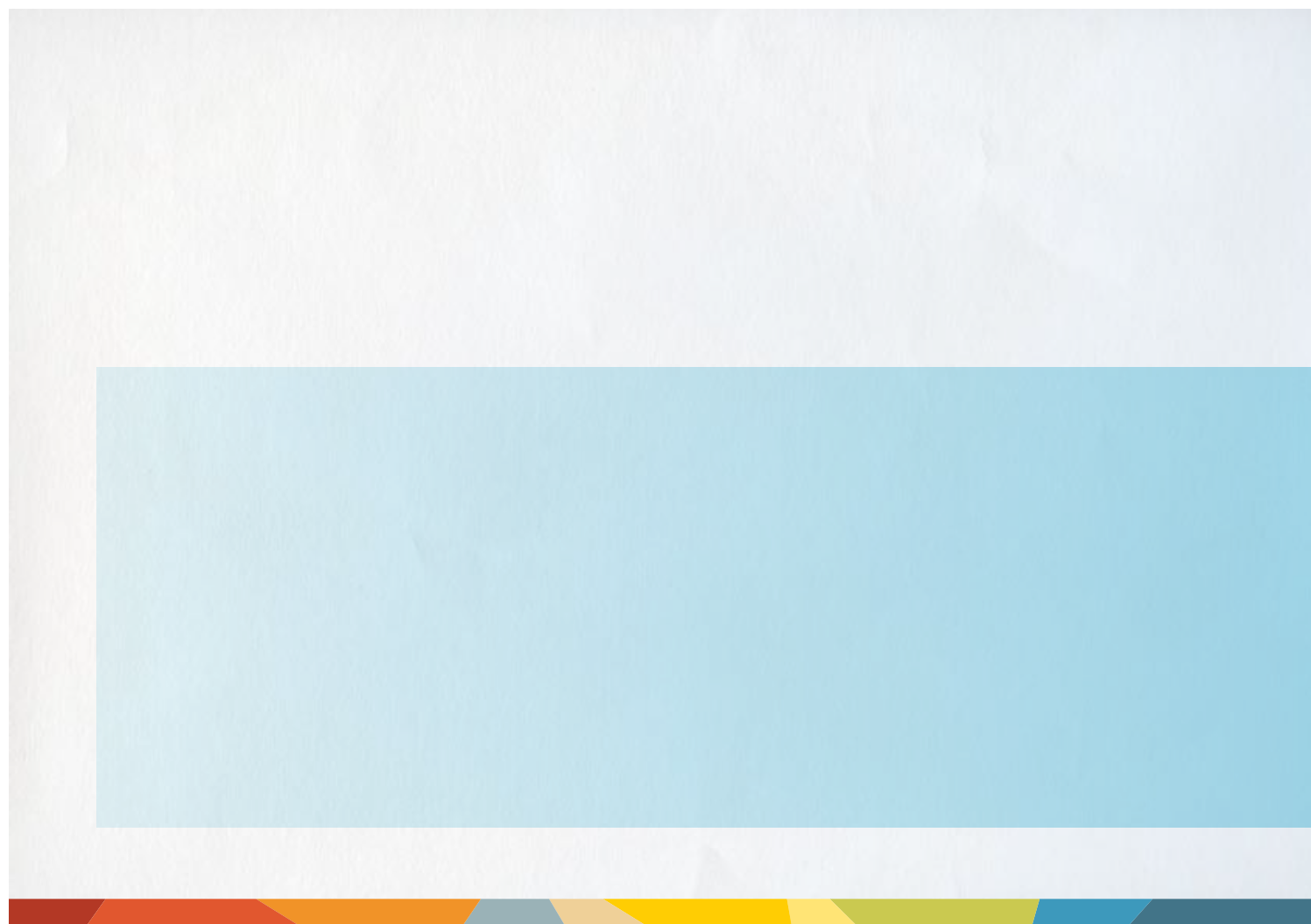
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