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National
Workforce
Centre for Child
Mental Health

Practicing cultural curiosity when engaging with children and families

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What is this resource about?

This paper provides an overview of some important considerations in relation to 'culturally competent', 'culturally curious' and child-focused practices when engaging with children and parents¹ from refugee and migrant communities².

It will invite you to reflect upon your current practice with children and families from migrant and refugee communities, asking:

- What is currently working?
- What improvements can be made?
- What might get in the way of genuine curiosity in your practice?
- What assumptions and biases might you hold?
- What practices would you like to develop?

It will also provide observations from practitioners who work with children and parents from migrant and refugee communities about the successes, challenges and lessons they have experienced through adopting a culturally curious stance.

¹ The term 'parent' will be used throughout this resource to describe a person undertaking the role of parenting and includes caregivers (e.g. grandparents, foster carers, kinship carers).

² See <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms> for brief descriptions that draw distinctions between these terms.



Key Messages

- Understanding the family's cultural context will help you to focus on children's social and emotional wellbeing.
- Effective engagement requires both 'cultural competency' and 'cultural curiosity'.
- Culturally curious practices are informed by an awareness of how practitioners' own culture and biases can shape assumptions, theories, beliefs and language about children, families, parenting and mental health and wellbeing.
- Children and families are valuable sources of cultural knowledge. Their skills and wisdom have enabled them to respond to experiences of adversity, and can continue to inform responses to current problems they are facing. Practitioners should be prepared to learn from clients about their understandings, perspectives and experiences.
- It is important to engage in reflective practice and draw on peer learning and other organisational supports when working with people from cultural backgrounds different to your own.

Who is this resource for?

This resource is designed for practitioners and organisations in the health, social and community service sectors who work with children and families from refugee and migrant communities.

Practice positions

A key aim of the National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health is to encourage and support practitioners to engage parents in conversations about their parenting role and their child's wellbeing, and to work confidently with infants and children. To help guide this work, Emerging Minds has developed six practice positions (shown below) that support practitioners to consistently apply a child-focused lens to their work with children and parents:

Curiosity

Collaboration

Context

Respect

Strengths and hopes

Child-aware and parent sensitive.

This paper extends on these practice positions in the context of working with children and families from migrant and refugee communities.

Cultural competence

In recent decades, the term 'cultural competence' has been adopted in response to the increasingly diverse cultural experiences of children, adults and families attending mainstream services. It has been described as 'the organisational and professional capacity to provide effective and appropriate service delivery to individuals from non-dominant cultural groups' (Armstrong, 2013, p.49).

From a practitioner perspective, cultural competence focuses on the development of awareness (both of one's own cultural values, attitudes and biases, and those of clients), knowledge (of other cultures), and practice skills including those of engagement, assessment, intervention, communication, and working with interpreters (Beagan, 2018).

Cultural competence is now considered a fundamental aspect of effective and ethical practice. Today, new and experienced practitioners alike are expected to have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to work in culturally competent ways with children and families (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016; Furlong & Wright, 2011; Hunter & Price-Robertson, 2014).

Strategies aimed at improving cultural competence focus on improving interactions between the practitioner and family, with the aim of making services more accessible. This in turn leads to increased health care utilisation, ultimately improving outcomes for children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds (Thackrah & Thompson, 2013).

However, despite its popularity, many practitioners still feel unsure when it comes to working confidently and competently with children and families from diverse communities. This may be because cultural competence is sometimes seen as a skill to be learned, separate to practitioners' direct client work; leaving them wondering how to find the time to acquire this knowledge, or even where to start.

When working with children from culturally diverse backgrounds, a lack of confidence can make practitioners reluctant to ask important questions about the child's social and emotional wellbeing. This counteracts the curiosity required to provide children and parents with the help and support that they need.

This paper focuses on an understanding of cultural competence that includes the complementary concept of 'cultural curiosity'. It provides some practical examples of competence that can be demonstrated by any practitioner who is committed to genuine curiosity.



Is cultural competence sufficient?

The nature, scope and theoretical foundations of cultural competence have been widely debated (Beagan, 2018; Fisher-Borne et.al., 2015; Garran & Rozas, 2013). Critiques include:

- The knowledge base acquired by practitioners is commonly founded on broad generalisations about 'different' cultures and portrays each as knowable, homogenous and unchanging (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016).
- Some approaches risk generalising differences between cultural groups and stereotyping members within groups, as culture is often conflated with race and ethnicity. This increases the possibility that 'culture' is inadvertently viewed only as a 'risk factor' and a potential source of the child or family's problems (Fisher-Borne et.al., 2015; Murdolo & Quiazon, 2016; Thackrah & Thompson, 2013).
- Cultural competency also risks diminishing practitioners' curiosity in the diversity that is present within cultures. It can obscure other aspects of people's identity and the power relations that also significantly shape their lives – such as gender, sexuality, age, ability, language, finances, housing and employment, racism and discrimination, and visa or residency status. These factors influence how families access power and privilege and experience marginalisation and oppression in their everyday lives, and therefore have implications for children's mental health and wellbeing. Some readers will be familiar with the concept of 'intersectionality', which among other things challenges the concept of culture as static and the use of one-dimensional categories to describe people's social identities and experiences of power and oppression (Beagan, 2018; Chen, 2017; Fisher-Borne et.al., 2015; Thackrah & Thompson, 2013).

Developments in approaches to cultural competence

Developments in cultural competence have taken the pressure off practitioners to be 'all knowing' about diverse cultures. Instead, the focus is now on providing a tailored framework which helps practitioners to develop their enquiry, assessment and support skills. These skills enable practitioners to understand how cultural contexts help, challenge or affect a parent's capacity to nurture their child's mental health and wellbeing.

To achieve this, the following practitioner understandings become critical:

- Practitioners need to be aware of how their beliefs, values and assumptions have been influenced by their own culture, and of how these assumptions may diminish curiosity or fairness in their practice (Beagan, 2018). Knowledge about particular cultures

must be seen as a starting point for conversations with culturally diverse children and parents, rather than as a set of immovable facts.

- Children and families should be given opportunities to tell their stories and supported to develop their own responses to the adversities that affect children's mental health.
- Agency processes need to be critically reviewed, to ensure that the experiences of children are regularly assessed, regardless of their cultural background.
- It is also important to include cultural information in assessment processes to inform case planning. This can include descriptions of identity, language needs, and other cultural considerations for practice, including both protective factors (e.g. connection to cultural community, practices and values) and risk factors (e.g. mistrust of formal services).



Cultural curiosity

Cultural curiosity acknowledges that practitioners cannot know or predict what life has been like for the child and family they are working with; nor can they know or predict the client's relationship with their culture, its history and traditions. Rather, it is a commitment to understand and find ways to acknowledge the experience of a child and their family.

It is well documented that children and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds face multiple barriers to service engagement (El-Murr, 2018), including a fear and distrust of authorities resulting from both pre- and post-arrival experiences. In this context, cultural curiosity enables the practitioner to demonstrate both an 'informed not-knowing' position³ and an intent to know and understand, as well as to sit comfortably with uncertainty and unknowing.

As the practitioner and child and family come to a shared understanding, trust can begin to develop.

³ 'Informed not-knowing' regards knowledge (and therefore generalisations) about cultural groups not as universally true but as 'useful starting points to one's curiosity' (Laird, 1998, cited in Furlong and Wright, 2011, p.48). The practitioner uses their questions to position the child or parent as the expert on their relationship to their own culture, thus testing the validity of generalised knowledge.



[Click here to watch video](#)

Nellie Anderson, Counsellor/Advocate, Children and Youth, Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service: *There's some cultural groups that we probably work with quite commonly and then there'll be times when I get a referral and I think 'I've never met with someone from that cultural group before'. And in a way that's really refreshing because it means that you go in with a genuine curiosity that perhaps wouldn't be there if you're used to working with the same cultural group.*

If there's anybody I know has expertise as a counsellor or from their own background or working with that community I might have a chat to them about the overall experiences and historical significance of how they might have come to Australia and maybe about whether counselling is a common thing there. If I have time I might do a bit of research but that's not always the case, but then the people that are the experts are the ones that are sitting in front of you so I might just come in really curious and ask them what does counselling mean to you? What does mental health mean to you? What's it like living in a different country? I think it can be really challenging and confronting working with new communities, but it doesn't necessarily have to be because if you kind of use the resource in front of you which is the person you're working with that's all the knowledge you really need.

I think when you work with people from different backgrounds or just anyone that's from a different experience than your own you can be curious from a personal point of view. But that might not be the curiosity that is going to help in the counselling context. So when I say 'genuine curiosity' I mean curiosity in a way to inform the work that you're going to be doing in the counselling room as opposed to just I'm curious about their culture and getting side-tracked on something that might be more for me than for the person in answering it.



Reflection

- What do you think supports you to remain curious in your work with children and families from cultural backgrounds different to your own?
- How might pre-existing knowledge about a child and family's culture have an unhelpful effect on your work with them?
- In what ways might you have inadvertently generalised or stereotyped encounters with culturally diverse children and families in the past?
- What generalisations or stereotypes might children and their families have of you and your culture that might affect their engagement with your service? How might you respond to these?

If you are not currently engaging with children and families from migrant and refugee communities, reimagine the questions to reflect on how you would like your practice to be.

Curiosity about your own culture

Curiosity about a practitioner's own culture includes critically reviewing the personal and professional biases, assumptions, beliefs and values that shape their work (Beagan, 2018, p.131). This means assessing the ideas gathered from personal/social lives and professional disciplines – e.g. about children, families, relationships and 'a good life' – that may be routinely taken-for-granted as reflecting universal truths or norms.

Identifying, challenging and attempting to unlearn such assumptions and biases is the beginning of a larger, ongoing process of awareness-gathering for the practitioner around power and privilege (Beagan, 2018; Wear et. al., 2012). It can also encourage practitioners to be open when seeking to understand how the families they are working with view identity, relationships, parenting, wellbeing, and connections to community and place.



[Click here to watch video](#)

Nellie: *The nature of my work is every family I work with is different from a cultural background than my own which is white and Caucasian. And so I try to be aware of my own understandings of family, of mental health, of expectations of children, and it can be difficult at times but I try to make sure that I'm not putting my own cultural norms or expectations on the family.*

I think they seep in all day every day. It can be just as small as the way I phrase something might not make sense, it could be phrased in a different way and I'm lucky to work with some really skilled interpreters and

we can do face to face interpreting and quite often they'll say 'the way you've said this doesn't make sense' but if I frame it in a different way it's going to make a lot more sense. So I think one of the ways I try to work in understanding my own culture is to just be open minded to any feedback or information or advice that is offered from anybody if they're from the same cultural background of the client or just a different person, because I think that the more you learn you realise the less you know. So it can just be those very small things like the way you phrase a sentence to really big things like themes or values that may be are so indiscrete that you don't even think about but if you reflect a bit harder it can become a bit more obvious.

I'm from a social work background so I like to have believed I've always tried to respect a person's own local knowledge or their self-determination. But I think that's a lifelong journey. So I just think the nature of the work is by being reflective and acknowledging your mistakes you're open to learning more. I think back now to how I worked with someone four years ago, two years, ago six months ago, and sometimes I'm like 'oh I really put my own values in front of what the young person's values are'. And if I'm still with the young person I will acknowledge that to them. So for example I'm a young woman whose had a very individualistic upbringing. And I've been able to pursue the things that are important to me. And I was working with another young girl who was really enjoying her education, but she's also got a big family with brothers and sisters which have complex needs. And she was finding it really difficult to manage both. And I think initially I was encouraging her to pursue education which is so important and then it was in another conversation where we kind of reflected together that she has two things that are really important to her which is her education but also the collective well-being of her family and what that means to her. Through having that conversation together we were able to talk about how hard it is for her to balance that and the need for her own well-being. So I always try to do it but I guess I think all practitioners make mistakes and so being reflective and open to acknowledging your mistakes is probably where a lot of useful learning comes from.



Reflection⁴

- What do you appreciate about your own cultural heritage?
- How might your appreciation for your own cultural heritage influence how you work with a child and family? How might it influence what you respond to in the conversation?
- How might you ensure your appreciation of your own culture enhances rather than reduces your appreciation of others' cultural backgrounds?
- What are some of the things that you appreciate about others' cultural heritages?
- How might your appreciation for the practices of other cultures influence your work?
- Are there things that you have learned through your relationships with people from other cultures that now influence your work?
- How might your own privilege be getting in the way of hearing or understanding the child and family's experience?
- How might your professional knowledge be experienced as helpful for the child and family? In what ways might it be unhelpful?

⁴ Some of these questions are from Raheim, S., et. al. (n.d.)

Curiosity about the family's experience

Whilst the refugee and migrant experience can bring significant opportunities for children and families, there can also be an immense sense of loss, particularly when there are concerns about the safety of family members and loved ones who remain behind. These concerns can have a significant impact on family functioning.

It is also important for practitioners to demonstrate curiosity in relation to the child and family's pre-arrival experience, and to be open to hearing the particulars of this. An understanding of the potential pre-arrival torture, trauma, perilous migration and negative experiences of settlement a family may have experienced plays a key role in this work, as does an awareness of the potential for intergenerational and community trauma. These understandings can attune a practitioner to the potential effects on children's mental health and wellbeing and highlight the importance of practicing trauma-informed care (El-Murr, 2018).

Children and families may experience significant shifts in gendered family dynamics and roles following settlement in Australia, as they attempt to integrate whilst preserving aspects of their original culture (El-Murr, 2018). Sometimes called 'acculturation stress', this process can result in differences in the extent to which rights

and social freedoms are taken up by family members. In turn, this can create conditions for relationship tensions, conflict and family violence, and is important for practitioners to be aware of. It is also important to note that with appropriate information and practical support, many families are able to respond to acculturation stress in ways that demonstrate resilience and adaptability.

Being subjected to racism and discrimination has a significant impact on children and parents from migrant and refugee communities as well. This can affect parent-child relationships; relationships between parents; children's schooling; and participation in daily activities, social networks and community activities (Saunders et al., 2015), as well as the family's overall sense of safety. Experiences of racism and discrimination form part of the broader context surrounding the child and family's presenting concerns.



Nellie: *I think for me the relationship is always the most important thing. I find you can't move forward or get very far if there's not a relationship of trust. I guess a lot of the families we work with, they've been through situations where their trust has been broken where there hasn't been a lot of safety. So you're probably not going to find that a lot of information or perhaps ideas that are discussed might not be followed through if there's not trust or a relationship there. So that's definitely my first priority.*

It can be interesting because there's the country of origin and other things that have informed how the family's functioned prior to coming to Australia. And then there's this really interesting point of discussing with the family how you parented in a different context, how, what's working here and what's not working.

Mthobeli Ngcanga, Counsellor/Advocate & Team Leader, Children and Youth, Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service: *When you first see the person even though you know about the person's culture, you give the person room to afford it for example if you meet someone for the first time it's important to hear from them. For example if they are from Iran it could be that this person is not necessarily from Iran but they escaped to Iran and then when they got to Iran they were ill-treated there. Now when you assume, because in the referral they say they're from Iran, and then you start to talk positively about Iran when their experience was negative that is not a good thing to experience.*

I would always tell the person that this is the information I have, and then I would like to hear from them. And then when I hear from them the knowledge I have about whatever country I have then I can share to show that for example if I meet someone who's from Afghanistan

and they came from Iran, when they talk about that to me, I'll say, "yeah and I heard that" - for example after they've told me I'll say, "yeah it's been a journey for you and I understand that some people tend to talk about negative experiences about Iran and I hope that was not the case for you, if it is so, it is just unfortunate. Let's see how we can work together from here going forward".

Nellie: *When I started working with kids I just had the assumption that all refugee children would be so happy to be in Australia because it must be safer and more resourced than the country they've come from, and that is not always the case. Like a lot of children I've worked with from Syria share wonderful stories about the type of schooling and family relationships and support they had prior to the war and then also lots of children maybe have been born into situations that are difficult but it's the norm for them and they have family there and they're used to it. So a lot of kids I meet are enjoying life in Australia but they have this real sense of grief for their home country. I think a lot of people might make the assumption like, "why are they sad, they should be happy they are here, they should be grateful that they're here". And I think that there's that assumption that all refugees should be grateful that they're in Australia and that's just not the reality. So I think there are these kind of assumptions that are made about different cultures, different religions or refugees in general that are sometimes completely wrong. So just kind of holding that in mind or thinking about have you got that information from the person or is that something that you've heard from somewhere else and weighing them up.*

Reflection

- How might the child and family's experiences, and the problems they are facing, be shaped by racism, discrimination, and disadvantage?
- How might your work together help to counteract or respond to these experiences?
- When you are being curious, how do you enquire about the challenges families have faced when settling in Australia, including potential experiences of racism and discrimination?
- How might you start conversations with children and families that enable them to share what they miss most about their country of origin?

Curiosity about parents' wisdom

Cultural curiosity is not just about gathering information from the child and family in order to understand their context. Respectful, collaborative and curious conversations can also help the child and family to reconnect with skills and wisdoms that can help them to respond to the problems they are facing. The practitioner can then find ways to acknowledge these skills and wisdoms and incorporate them into their practice; or circulate them more broadly so they become useful for other families.

Respectful, collaborative and curious conversations with children and families do not mean that practitioners need to disown their own knowledge. The provision of important localised information in relation to health, education, and Centrelink services can help parents to draw on their own skills and wisdoms in empowering ways.



Mthobeli: As I've said, with a child we want to understand the situation from their perspective. We also want to get the parents perspective. But on top of it we also want to see the parents' understanding and skills in dealing with the situation because that is important. Most often you find that parents see that there are behaviours that they don't like about the children and they understand that this probably has to do with what happened in the past. And then the approach would be, "look we have to forget this, you know this is not helping you", so that approach wouldn't be the best for the kid. So you want to make sure that you have an understanding of the parents' understanding of the situation and their perspective on how to deal with that situation. And then from there you get to learn what the parents know about the situation and how they probably have dealt with these things in their culture. And then you can then work from there so I'll get this approach maybe it worked well for certain situations, let's see if it works with this situation and then let's maybe add some more things that might build on what you are doing so that we can make sure that we give the best for the child.

It is important because in as much as I might come with some understanding that is that we call it expertise, the wisdom of the parents is significant because they will be with those children every day. I will only see the child once a week. So building on their wisdom will help them to have confidence in this new information. If you do away with their wisdom then the bridge will be so wide and then it will be very hard for the parents to adjust to this new information. But if you build on what they have already that helps them to move and also to own it they own it and feel like I'm growing instead of being cut off from my child's experience.

When it comes to the wisdom of the parents then I always have that in mind that culture is deep and people do things because of the cultural background. For example the approach that the parent might use here it might have worked well in where they come from because of the support system that they might have there that is culturally informed whereas when they come into an individualistic society that approach might not work well hence it's important to acknowledge their wisdom but at the same time acknowledge that there might be some limitations of that wisdom in this situation without discrediting their wisdom.

Nellie: So I think local knowledge there's kind of two layers to that. One is perhaps the local knowledge of the community so if someone's from a country what is the norm of parenting there and what skills and values are used. And then on top of that a lot of our families have experienced displacement or hardship. And so the family has adapted to deal with that trauma or hardship. So then there's the local knowledge in how did that family function or cope during that hard time. And I think those adaptations can show up in maybe day to day life in Australia and in the resettlement phase and perhaps be pathologised as 'dysfunctional' or not a family that's functioning well. But when you look at it in the context of this is what the family did to survive an immense trauma, it's a lot more respectful and so then if a family has made some adaptations to manage through the stress it's about looking at if that stress has now passed, how does this family change again to fit the context that they're living in.

Reflection

- How do you currently explore the ways in which parents have been responding to the problems they and their children face?
- How do you trace the history of these responses in their family life, and how these responses might have changed or been adapted for their new circumstances?
- How might these responses be linked to community and cultural influences and traditions? How do you invite parents to tell these stories?
- In what ways might you bring into your own practice the skills and wisdoms of the families you work with? How might these become helpful to others?

Curiosity about the child's skills and know-how

Engaging with children involves practitioners partnering with children in conversations about the important aspects of their lives, and the decisions that affect them. The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health invites practitioners to adopt a perspective of children as:

● Active

Children are active in shaping their own lives, making meaning of their experiences, and possessing an array of skills, know-how, creativity and imagination.

● Knowledgeable

Children possess significant knowledge, language and understandings to define and describe both problems and solutions.

● Contributors

Children are skilled and capable collaborators in the task of finding useful responses to problems and can make helpful contributions to others facing similar circumstances.

● Contextual

Children's views and experiences exist in the broader contexts, circumstances and relationships that surround them, that they can evaluate for themselves.

Cultural curiosity asks practitioners to extend on these perspectives, and to be especially interested in how the child's connection to cultural and community stories and heritages can support and sustain their mental health and wellbeing.



Nellie: *In terms of practicality, I always assume that if I'm going to be working with a child or young person particularly someone still in primary school the whole family is going to be who I'm supporting. So I make an effort to meet with the family and the parents or guardians first sometimes with the young person present and sometimes not just depending on what the parents are most comfortable with. And I guess that just helps to get a narrative from the parent's perspective and to build trust because any change that's going to happen has to happen within the family system not just in a one on one session with the young person. So I think it's really important to build that rapport and trust with parents and sometimes families might not know what counselling is or what mental health is. So it's really important to explore what their expectations are and what their hopes are.*

Mthobeli: *When you come as a practitioner you have this knowledge that you have which is informed by education most often.*

However I think learning from the young person is the key to support them better because if you come with all the knowledge that you bring to the counselling room it might be what you want, what you know, what you've learned as a practitioner but not what the young person might be able to cope with. So building on what they know about themselves, it's kind of like when you build a house you can't just come in put a brick in the air and hope that the structure is going to be solid. So building from what is there it helps like for example with one young person that I am working with, he had nightmares that were always waking him up. So I've worked with young people who have nightmares but with this young person I've learned that he had some strategies that he's using. And also what informs the nightmares for him. So knowing what he does when the nightmares come out help me to better support him because we started from what he was doing and acknowledge that the approach that he was taking was for example he would wake up and go straight to check if his parents were safe. So to me that was a strength that we have to focus on and say look in as much as this situation is terrible it looks like to me you have a heart for your family and that's a starting point, and then we go back as to how then you can best do this in a way that is supportive of your well-being in the end instead of focusing one thing on nightmares or when you have nightmares thinking about breathing exercise and other stuff, breathing exercises and all the modalities that we can use to do that are significant but they must be owned by the young person. So starting from what they know is highly significant.

Reflection

- What are your current approaches for working directly with children?
- How might you be able to involve immediate family, extended family and/or the community in better understanding the child's cultural stories and heritage?
- How might you understand and respond to the expectations of both children and parents around parents' participation in your work with the child?
- How might you guard against inadvertently discounting or excluding parents' participation in your work with children on account of language barriers or other assumptions?
- How do you work with parents to develop a strategy to support children in your practice?

Organisational support

Organisations can play an influential role in supporting their staff's culturally curious practices. Although significant, visible markers of cultural diversity in organisations (such as brochures in multiple languages) and practitioner awareness are often not sufficient to ensure cultural competency and curiosity. Leadership sets the tone for an organisational context that supports reflective practice and supportive peer-to-peer conversations. Formal training and supervision processes are also essential in supporting staff to develop a culturally curious approach and manage the uncertainty that accompanies a commitment to these practices.

Other structural enablers include an intentional diversity and inclusion plan, accompanied by policies and procedures that facilitate the employment of a diverse workforce, and budgetary allocations for interpreters.



[Click here to watch video](#)

Nellie: *I think one of the best things about my organisation is that we're from multidisciplinary backgrounds and so it is an extremely multicultural organisation. Different ages, different trainings and it's just so wonderful because I feel like there's so much knowledge within my organisation I'm constantly learning and it's not just one-way learning. It's respectful and there's difficult conversations that help scaffold learning for everybody, so it's one of the very helpful things in my work.*

I definitely think it's the peer to peer relationships. You can't have difficult conversations if there's not trust. So being able to build those relationships in an organisation is really important. I've worked in other organisations but because STARS is so multicultural it really means that people who are from diverse backgrounds can speak a bit from their perspective and it's really respected. So I guess not all organisations can be as multicultural but maybe it's about not being scared to hear a different perspective even if it can be a bit confronting and it doesn't mean you always have to agree with it but just learning to hear about different perspectives can just open your mind a little bit or have you looking at something a bit differently.

Mthobeli: *I think the organisational culture itself is highly significant. For example if we have an organisation that looks at people from the human rights perspective.*

I think for that to be effective it needs to be experienced within the organisation. The organisation has to own it and live it and strive to live it. I must say wisely there is no situation where everything is perfect but striving towards living the values that you aspire to share or deliver to the people that you're working with. I think that is highly significant.

Reflection

- What reflective supervision processes would help you to maintain this cultural curiosity, even when cultural practices might conflict or challenge your own beliefs/values?
- What training might be required to enable you to work in culturally curious ways?
- How do you and your organisation implement culturally curious practice? How does this practice keep children visible?

Summary

This paper has provided some reflections and observations about working in genuinely curious ways with children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds. It challenges some common beliefs about cultural competence and hopefully helps you to reflect on your own work with children and families, and how this can be enhanced by a position of curiosity.

Continued conversations around effective practice with culturally diverse families are crucial, as are consistent organisational responses. The intention of this paper is to continue the conversation; and to encourage organisations and individual practitioners to reflect on their practice policies, assessment tools, supervision and professional processes, with the view to providing child-focused service delivery to suit clients of all cultures.



Emerging Minds is committed to producing quality resources to support practitioners and services who work with children and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Because you have taken the time to read this paper, we would value your comments about additional resources that would support your work in this area. We have three questions for you [here](#).

Further information

A comprehensive suite of resources in relation to working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) adolescents is available at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-cald-adolescents>

Emerging Minds podcasts:

[Reflections on culturally competent practice with Mthobeli Ngcanga](#)

[Reflections on culturally competent practice with Nellie Anderson](#)

Intimate partner violence in Australian refugee communities:

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/cfca-paper/intimate-partner-violence-australian-refugee-communities>

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2017/04/06/barriers-formal-and-informal-supports-refugee-families-australia>

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2017/04/12/improving-formal-service-responses-refugee-families-australia>

Key issues in working with men from immigrant and refugee communities in preventing violence against women:

https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/100-WR_Research_Paper_V7.pdf

Further information about how organisations can support child-focused practice: <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/six-ways-to-support-child-focused-practice-in-adult-services/>

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