Understanding practice with culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people who have experienced domestic and family violence: A practitioner perspective

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Abstract
There is a dearth of research focused on practice responses with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV). This knowledge gap may result in a lack of professional guidance and clarity for practitioners who work in this complex context. This small-scale qualitative research study explored practice responses with CALD children and young people. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine practitioners who supported and responded to CALD children and young people and their families at the intersection of DFV and child protection. Data included their practice experience, professional knowledge and practice wisdom. A thematic analysis was used that highlighted the importance of practitioners prioritising the needs of children and young people and navigating the complexities of culture and gender.

KEYWORDS
child protection, child-centred, cultural diversity, domestic violence

Key Practitioner Messages
- Culture does not diminish the lived experiences of children experiencing domestic and family violence, and their safety is paramount.
- Best practice responses for CALD children are dependent on understanding the intersection of domestic and family violence, culture and gender.
- Navigating cultural protocols facilitates engagement with family and community, and therefore, uses culture as a strength-based protective mechanism.

INTRODUCTION
Children’s experiences of domestic and family violence (DFV) have gained increasing importance in recent years, and there is an urgent imperative to identify effective policy and service responses. Exposure to DFV is now regarded as a form of child abuse in law and statutory guidance in many Western nations, which is reflected in child protection frameworks, including in Australia where this research was undertaken (Campo, 2015). Australia has a unique cultural landscape due to distinctive migration patterns (Sawrikar & Katz, 2014a). Although the findings of this research have international relevance for countries where exposure to DFV is an identified form of child maltreatment and where child protection systems embrace a child-centred philosophy.

DFV includes physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse and coercive control. It is perpetrated within intimate relationships, namely against a partner or spouse and predominantly perpetrated by males against females (Seymour...
et al., 2023). Many females who experience this violence are mothers, which results in the oppression and victimisation of mothers and their children. Children who have experienced violence are at risk of many detrimental impacts, including experiencing poor mental health, developing cognitive and behavioural problems, developmental issues and poor learning outcomes (Howarth et al., 2019).

There is limited knowledge about the intersectionality of DFV, cultural diversity, gender and age. Applying an intersectional perspective in social work practice provides a means of understanding experiences of DFV as it considers the bearing of factors such as culture, gender and age (Bernard & Harris, 2016). Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people have refugee or migrant backgrounds, are part of relatively new and emerging communities and their cultures are diverse to Western and First Nations cultures. Collectivism and patriarchy are positioned as crucial cultural factors affecting the perceptions and experiences of many CALD families at the intersection of DFV and child protection. This may be related to prioritising collective needs over the needs of the individual and hierarchal structures based on age, gender and community status (Laird & Tedam, 2019; Sawrikar & Katz, 2014a). Such systems place value on strict adherence to traditional gender roles, family cohesion and interdependence of family and community members. Family honour is important in collectivist communities and influences how the family is considered by the community. Respect and dignity form considerable social capital, but matters of disrespect can bring the family into disrepute. Mothers can be expected to preserve family cohesion ‘no matter what’, and violence is seen as a private issue. Breaking cultural expectations may tarnish the ‘family name’ and incur stigma, exclusion and isolation. These cultural values and expectations may be central to collectivist cultural systems, and communities and their harmony, productivity and order. There are many benefits of being a part of collectivist communities, including being able to draw on extended support and strong interpersonal and group ties (Laird & Tedam, 2019).

Furthermore, some families may come from countries where DFV is not a legal issue and there are no formal child protection systems. Thus, they may not understand the gravity of exposing children to DFV and potential statutory responses by child protection (Sawrikar & Katz, 2014b). Additionally, people with refugee backgrounds can experience significant trauma from war, which may expose people to social issues that exacerbate the intersection of DFV and child protection (Nylland, 2016).

Social work practice at the intersection of DFV and child protection strives to ensure the provision, protection and participation rights exemplified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) are upheld (Barnes, 2018). The UNCRC has been ratified in 196 countries. More specifically, Article 19 dictates the child’s right to safety and protection from harm. However, the operationalisation of these rights is problematic. The implementation of protection rights is steeped in complexity and influenced by cultural norms and social construction of children (Lawrence, 2004). In Western-orientated individualistic nations, the realisation of children’s rights is operationalised through the implementation of a child-centred ethos. Being child-centred requires practitioners to ensure children are seen and heard, and their rights and needs prioritised (Bastian, 2020; Bastian et al., 2022). It could be argued that this is the antithesis of collectivist values. For example, in systems where age-based hierarchal structures are predominant, and where group needs are prioritised, families may not understand why children’s needs are prioritised while theirs are not equally considered (Sawrikar & Katz, 2014a). This has contributed to ongoing challenges in the implementation of child-centred practice and the protection of CALD children.

Social work practice is heavily informed by Western values and white culture, which contributes to institutionalised racism (Bhatti-Sinclair, 2011). Cultural absolutism can be applied in child protection practice, which means behaviours and practices can be judged against a universal set of values based on ethnocentrism (Sawrikar & Katz, 2014a). This may position practice with CALD children and families from a deficit perspective, denying them their right to diversity and cultural safety, and result in the imposition of one-size-fits all approaches, which are oppressive and harmful. Viewing culture as static can also result in oppressive interventions involving ‘othering’, stereotyping, disregarding strengths and missed opportunities for inquiry into each child’s experiences. Culture is a fluid concept in constant reinterpretation in each social interaction and is defined and determined by individuals (Smethurst & Bhatti-Sinclair, 2017). Certain cultural values may be pertinent to one family who identifies with the culture, but not for another. Therefore, finding out how individuals themselves understand and experience their culture and its value to them, and incorporating these understandings into interventions, is crucial to anti-racist, anti-oppressive, strengths-based practice. Such approaches are needed so culture and diversity can be taken into account, while simultaneously ensuring the equitable provision of protection for children is not compromised.

Knowledge about how practitioners understand their practice with CALD children experiencing DFV is wanting. This research focuses on building knowledge about how practitioners understand the intersection of culture and violence, and what influences their child protection practice responses. The research is significant because it draws from the commitment, strengths and practice wisdom of practitioners who work with CALD children experiencing DFV. The knowledge generated from social work practice will contribute towards informing anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices (Baines, 2017) with CALD children who experience DFV.
METHODS

Research design

Qualitative methodology was employed to generate insight and knowledge from the experiences of practitioners. An interpretive paradigm was used to explore and derive a pattern of meaning and understanding in their experiences and practice approaches. It allowed for the contextualisation and analysis of the practitioners’ distinct and unique understandings specific to their work interactions (Neuman, 2013). Aspects of a critical paradigm were also drawn upon, despite the theoretical and philosophical agendas of critical and interpretive research being somewhat at odds. Critical research proponents argue interpretive research is amoral and passive, as structural forces and social conditions are not examined, and it does not take a strong value position. This means broader contextual factors may go unrecognised, impeding thorough understandings and opportunity for meaningful change and structural reform (Neuman, 2013). Not all critical research aspects were congruent with this study, but a critical paradigm was drawn on by adopting an anti-racist, intersectional feminist perspective (Bernard, 2021).

Recruitment and sample

The participating practitioners were from specialist teams within two organisations who worked specifically with CALD families and provided culturally responsive intervention. These organisations were Women’s Safety Services (WSSSA) (non-government) and the Department for Child Protection (DCP) (government). WSSSA provides crisis intervention to women and their children experiencing DFV. DCP is a statutory child protection agency that responds to child abuse and neglect notifications, including DFV exposure notifications. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used (Neuman, 2013). The participants were recruited through an information session held at each service which was pre-arranged with team leaders’ permission. At the session, the potential participants were informed about the purpose, methods, demands, risks and potential benefits of the project, and that Flinders University Research Ethics Committee had approved the research. There were 11 potential participants, and nine chose to participate. All participants held a degree in social work (Table 1).

Data collection

The data were collected through audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews (Hardwick & Worsley, 2011). Prior to interviews commencing, ethical considerations were discussed with participants. This included audio recording of the interviews, confidentiality and data protection, risks associated with discomfort and the right to withdraw at any time. Participants were forwarded the interview questions for their consideration prior to the interview. Five predetermined questions were used to elicit information about their work.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was forwarded to the appropriate participant, providing them with the opportunity to review, edit and/or amend the information. An inductive approach was used, and the data were analysed thematically. This allowed for patterns, trends and regularities to be observed across the data set from which themes emerged, meanings were derived and conclusions were drawn (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis

| TABLE 1 | Characteristics of the population group. |
|---|---|---|
| | Women’s Safety Services | Department for Child Protection |
| Agency | 3 | 6 |
| Gender | Female | Male |
| 6 | 3 |
| Background | Voluntarily self-identified as CALD | Voluntarily self-identified as not CALD | Did not self-identify |
| 6 | 2 | 1 |

Abbreviation: CALD, culturally and linguistically diverse.
process began by immersion in the data. Hand coding was then conducted according to the three stages described by Strauss and Corbin (1990): open, axial and selective. Reflection was used during these coding stages to assist in identifying the global, dominant and sub-themes.

**Limitations**

A small sample informed this study, and as a result, the findings cannot be generalised. However, a small sample size in qualitative research generates rich dialogue. This study examined practice from a practitioner perspective, and therefore is not reflective of children’s experiences. This study did not demarcate between cultural groups and communities. Thus, the findings cannot be generalised to working with all CALD people but can contribute to a growing body of research and the development of best practice principles.

**FINDINGS**

The analysis of the findings identified how practitioners worked in culturally responsive ways and how they managed the tensions in being simultaneously child-centred and culturally responsive. Four interconnected themes emerged, including ‘understanding the intersection of DFV and child protection for CALD families’, ‘the prioritising of children’, ‘being family-focused and community-minded’ and ‘being culturally sensitive and aware’. Each theme highlights the complex and intersecting considerations practitioners navigated in their engagement and implementation of interventions with CALD children and their families.

**Understanding the intersection of DFV and child protection for CALD families**

Cultural context influences parental understandings of DFV and risk to children. As discussed by the participants, some people were raised in families and countries where violence was tolerated. Therefore, parents may not understand what constitutes DFV or recognise the detrimental effects it has on their children. If violence is normalised or seen as acceptable, perpetrators may see no reason to stop, and mothers may see no reason to seek help.

Husband and wife sort of normalise it: ‘oh that’s a normal thing’. Over generations, they may have seen it that way, so they are not considering DV as a big issue, or even an issue that is physically or emotionally impacting their children … The lack of knowledge is sometimes without intent to some level, creating some child protection issues.

(Participant 5)

The participants also explained that pre-migration adversity and trauma may influence DFV, particularly for people from refugee backgrounds, along with many added stressors associated with post-migration acculturation and socio-economic and political oppression. These too are significant risk factors (Nyland, 2016).

There are elements to it. A lot of the issues … are financial … and then alcohol as well, and alcohol is associated with trauma … Being in a new country is a challenge itself. Settling in for many families is a battle … the parenting or family unit … as they know back in the country where they come from, it is non-existent … these people woke up one night, boom, find themselves as a refugee … they have never been to cities; they have never been in classrooms … some of them cannot read and write.

(Participant 5)

The participants also spoke about identifying and understanding strengths and resources within CALD children’s contexts. A strength-based approach is solution-focused and utilises strengths and resources present in children’s environments to build on protective factors to achieve change and safety (Oliver & Charles, 2016).

Acknowledging cultural and religious strengths of the family I think is really child-centred because you are strengthening the family and honouring their strengths.

(Participant 1)
Understanding cultural strengths informed practice that was strengths-based. Cultural systems and experiences offer strengths and resources which can be used as protective factors to assist with risk mitigation and creating child safety (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2014).

The prioritising of children

The prioritising of children was an emergent and dominant theme. It was clear the participants prioritised children by listening to them, putting their safety first and maintaining their cultural identity. The participants explained that listening to children and paying attention to what they say is critically important. This helps them to understand the risks children experience, cultural implications and which interventions are required, so practice is in children’s best interests.

The whole idea is to make sure we listen to the child’s voice, and what is happening and how we can tailor our practice, or our intervention, to make sure that the voice of the child is at the centre of what we do. (Participant 3)

When children cannot explain what is happening in their lives, they become invisible. Children are the most valuable information source about their lives and the impact that issues are having on them in the specific context of their family (Munro, 2011).

The participants explained that understanding children’s views, feelings and experiences facilitated advocacy-informed practice. They elaborated that ensuring these were at the forefront of conversations with parents enabled children to remain visible. This approach involved challenging or confronting parental standpoints that were not child-centred.

If they discount what the child is saying, then it is your responsibility to be able to educate them and translate what the child is saying … in a sense that they do understand, and they reflect. (Participant 9)

The participants were emphatic that their primary practice considerations were to assess safety risks and impacts of DFV on children, and how to protect them from further exposure. They illustrated that, although important, cultural beliefs, understandings and values must not obscure the paramount consideration of child safety.

There is no way culture will trump safety … Safety has to come first, irrespective of what … (Participant 3)

It was evident that decisions to report and respond to abuse were decided in the same way, regardless of cultural background. The significance of the children’s experiences and the impacts on them inform the required protective responses.

The participants clearly identified that prioritising CALD children’s needs also required an in-depth understanding of culture, and decision-making required considering and maintaining children’s cultural identities. When women leave perpetrators or seek support outside the cultural norms and expectations, this could result in them and their children’s alienation from the community. Cultural connection loss can be particularly critical for people when their extended family has not migrated with them (Vaughan et al., 2015). Understanding possible cultural implications may challenge practitioners to navigate the tensions of child safety without contributing to ongoing harm.

The community blame the woman and children … they don’t see this as a safety risk, they see it more as disrespectful … If they call police or leave the husband … they have to let go of all the connection, all of the community ties … The difficulty would be even more to leave the husband rather than to live with the husband. (Participant 4)

Due to such possible consequences, the participants spoke about using practice approaches that would preserve and sustain relationships, retain family cohesion and simultaneously ensure child safety.

Removing children from family perpetrators can contradict family views … in doing so we are compromising cultural safety … Western ideals say take mum and child out of the house; we would say there are other ways to keep families together. (Participant 1)
The participants also discussed maintaining the children’s cultural identities in out-of-home care when there is no alternative to remove children due to their significant harm experiences and/or ongoing harm risks. They explained that children should be placed with extended family in the first instance, or with families from the same cultural community. This approach attempts to preserve cultural rights, connection and identity.

We have a responsibility to place them with their own community, with their kinship group, or extended family … a Muslim child who sees his parents pray five times a day, eats halal food, the girls wear hijabs; if we … put them with Anglo carers, who don’t do any of those things, we are further traumatising the child. (Participant 1)

If children are disconnected from their culture, there is the likelihood of trauma exacerbation and long-term detrimental impacts to their socio-emotional-physical development and wellbeing (Silburn et al., 2006).

**Being family-focused and community-minded**

Another theme to emerge was the importance of ‘being family-focused and community-minded’. This theme explored views about educating families and communities, partnering with mothers and drawing on their strengths, focusing on perpetrator accountability and utilising extended family and community resources. These practice elements were seen to contribute to the realisation of children’s rights, safety and wellbeing.

The ability to prioritise children’s safety and cultural needs requires skills to develop professional alliances with significant people in their lives. The participants articulated that it is necessary to work with parents to educate them about DFV and its long-lasting impacts on children’s development. This was seen as key to establishing new understandings for parents with the potential to keep children safe and avoid their removal from the parents.

We want to avoid removing children. We want to … provide education. (Participant 1)

We give education and explain … the impacts that the DV is having on their children emotionally and physically … ; also, we explain what sort of modelling they are giving the children. (Participant 5)

The participants articulated that their work can also require them to engage with the broader community to provide education.

Let them know about the system, to let them know about the services available, to educate them, because if the community knows, they can explain that in a less threatening way … DV is such a complex issue that cannot be addressed through one or two visits. You need someone to be there constantly, to talk them through and give them strategies. (Participant 4)

Such approaches have the potential to increase awareness and reduce shame, stigma and repercussions for women and children. Including community members may also mean they speak to the family about the issue. This can reinforce the ‘practitioner voice’ and intervention, increasing the likelihood of the family accepting the need for change.

The participants conveyed that the most effective protective factors can reside in the capacities and strengths of the mothers involved. Informing women of their rights to safety and to access resources also contributes to the protection of their children.

They have fought war; some have got on a boat; they went through atrocities to protect their children and get them here to safety. (Participant 1)

Empowering information to women is giving more opportunity for them to know they also have power and rights and that they don’t need to be living in the situation and they can know where the supports and services are. (Participant 5)
Women’s only information source about their rights in their new country may be from their abusive partners who could misinform them (Ghafournia, 2011). However, if women understand their rights, it gives them options about their relationships and increases their strengths and capacity to protect their children.

Engaging with the perpetrators was also seen as important by the child protection practitioner participants. They described that this involved explaining to fathers that violence is never acceptable or justifiable. Referring men to programmes and services contributed to challenging their beliefs and behaviours which are harmful to their children. This provides them with the possibility to effect positive change in their lives and opportunity for safety and family cohesion to be restored.

I am very mindful to put that accountability to the perpetrator, usually to the male, and explain to them what they are going to lose …

We refer the parents for services … all those issues we identify with them and they will seek some help and we will support them to get that help so they are able to address those issues to come back to the family.

Engaging the extended family, community members and community leaders were also strategies used by the participants in the safety planning processes to address children’s safety and cultural needs.

… if we bring in family and community and community leaders, we can really create safety for a child within the home because there is a lot of those extra added protections as well as our own checks.

Collectivist families and communities are generally willing to support each other. When it is appropriate to engage members, they can support parents and be involved in the care and protection of children (Sawrikar & Katz, 2014b).

**Being culturally sensitive and aware**

The final theme focuses on the importance of ‘being culturally sensitive and aware’. The participants articulated the importance of respecting gender-based cultural values and protocols, and tailoring communication that facilitates effective engagement to address child safety concerns.

Knowledge and understanding about the intersectionality of culture and gender facilitate culturally sensitive engagement (Bernard & Harris, 2016). Some participants explained that respecting the hierarchy and traditional gender roles were essential for effective engagement and practice. They enact this by approaching ‘the head of the household’ first, and having male practitioners speak to fathers and female practitioners speak to mothers.

It’s the community leaders that come first and then it narrows to the family unit, so, the head of the family unit will always be a man … We have to follow the right channels for us to get good engagement … he stood outside of the house and had a chat and allowed a female worker to go inside and speak with the woman … if we had not followed that, we would not have got any engagement. We would not have been able to educate the family or let them know what services are available … to do our work we have to be mindful of the hierarchy.

Participants highlighted that culturally inappropriate practices and not respecting protocols may anger fathers and potentially result in further violence towards family and children.

We need to try and be as respectful as we can to him and make sure that our engagement with him is something that is acceptable so there is not a retaliation to the mum. There are a lot of things we need to consider, like making sure we have a man speaking to dad and a woman speaking to mum.

The participants illustrated how they respect gender-based values and protocols through culturally sensitive practice. Engagement can be impeded without this, and practitioners may not be able to work effectively with children and significant people in their lives to ensure children’s safety.
Culturally aware communication creates shared understandings between family members and practitioners so they can work effectively in partnership towards ensuring children’s safety. The participants indicated that this involves listening to people and understanding their values, context and standpoints and acknowledging these while also asserting societal expectations about child protection.

Sitting down with them and talking to them, ‘oh how do you guys do it over there, what is your perspective?’

(Participant 3)

It’s really starting from the ground up and just saying for example, I know that maybe in [country name] the neighbours wouldn’t bat an eye lid if a wife was getting hit, it’s not something that anyone would interfere with, but in Australia we say that domestic violence is everybody’s business, and child protection is everybody’s business.

(Participant 1)

The participants expanded on the topic of culturally aware communication and explained that, to facilitate this, they described to parents DFV effects and consequences experienced by other CALD families. This helps them to communicate the ramifications to parents in appropriate and understandable terms.

Live examples, they are very effective … we will give extreme domestic violence examples: for example, when unintended physical harm has happened (to a child) in a domestic violence incident … we put these sort of examples (to the parents), without mentioning identity. They can … easily correlate that with their situation. They can see that they do some of these things.

(Participant 5)

They went on to explain that culturally aware communication can involve using the individual’s own scripts, culture and terms of reference, as exemplified by the following participant.

Some parts in [religious text] … could be misinterpreted … she started to give examples of how [religious text] talks about the husband, so for me to break that … I had to give verses from [religious text] that say, no, if you accept violence that is a wrong thing … That is the way I got her to engage with services otherwise she would have never done that … to be child-centred, to protect the woman and children, you have to use their own culture to ensure safety.

(Participant 4)

Such approaches facilitate meaningful communication, which can provide parents with an alternative narrative and understanding about violence. They can also motivate parents to work collaboratively with practitioners to ensure their children’s safety. In the above example, religion was used, which many collectivist people closely follow and plays a central role in the manner they live (Laird & Tedam, 2019).

DISCUSSION

This study highlights that there are complex and intersecting factors requiring special consideration to ensure CALD children experiencing DFV are safe and well. To be child-centred, practitioners must navigate the complexity and tensions of the situations they face to ensure their practice is culturally responsive and consistent with cultural protocols. Understanding culture and being culturally responsive has emerged as a dominant practice approach, although the participants in this study were emphatic that cultural understandings must never override children’s safety and wellbeing.

A rights-based, child-centred approach includes simultaneously ensuring children’s cultural identities and connections are maintained as well as their safety. Community connection and culture contribute to children’s social capital and reinforce their cultural beliefs, traditions and practices, which enhances child development (Laird & Tedam, 2019). The findings indicate a family preservation approach by the practitioners striving to keep families together to ensure children are not isolated from their communities and culture. Successful family preservation and risk mitigation result in the best outcomes for children. When removal is necessary, children are provided with the essentials which underpin the continuity of their cultural experiences.

The study identified benefits of working with cultural resources and strengths that exist in children’s lives. Collectivist cultural belief systems hold inherent value which have served populations for generations and culture can contribute
positively to children’s development, safety and wellbeing (AIFS, 2014). The practitioners drew on mothers’ strengths and cultural resources including those related to religion, extended family and community, and they respected cultural ways of doing things. This anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach was illustrated as helping to ensure women’s and children’s physical and cultural safety and at the same time family and community autonomy and self-determination. When children cannot remain safely in their families, their cultural identities and connection to culture must be a key consideration when making placement decisions. Laird and Tedam (2019) state that social capital and resources rooted in communities have been cited as enhancing child development.

A key finding that emerged from the study was the importance of engaging with hierarchical structures and traditional gender roles. This may present a challenge for some practitioners when working through a DFV-informed lens dominated by post-structuralist feminism (Seymour et al., 2023) and critical social work. Practices such as asking men permission to speak to women are patriarchal in nature and not considered consistent with critical social work. This approach, however, was deemed necessary by the practitioners to maximise engagement potential for better outcomes for children. This approach also did not detract from intersectional post-structural feminist principles as the practitioners analysed and navigated the socio-cultural context and determined how best to facilitate women and children’s voices in this context in anti-racist ways. Without this approach, it may not have been possible to meaningfully interact with children and families to ensure child safety.

The practitioners demonstrated how they applied child-centred practice in respectful ways that were attuned to the whole family’s needs, and where people’s cultural values and identities were not compromised or challenged. The practitioners’ child-centred approaches were focused on child safety and wellbeing but were also inclusive of the family’s overall needs. These findings highlight that child-centred approaches are, arguably, not the antithesis of collectivist values because they hold the potential for families to avoid dire consequences, maintain the family unit and ensure child safety.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Working at the intersections of DFV, child protection and cultural diversity requires clear practice guidance and articulation of key principles to achieve what is in the child’s best interest. Understanding and engaging with cultural nuances and diversity and identifying strengths can contribute to the safety and protection of children. Kaur and Atkin (2018) attest to the lack of evidence-based practice guidelines for working with CALD populations. Practitioners require practice guidance to manage the complexities of being culturally responsive at the intersection of DFV and child protection.

Being culturally responsive is complex. Practitioners require guidance that incorporates the importance of understanding CALD communities, their protocols, culturally respectful engagement, being mindful of gender issues and navigating intervention to ensure children are safe and protected. This needs to be informed by a framework of cultural humility, while also ensuring the protection of children is not compromised. In addition, it is imperative that culture is never used as a rationalisation for violence and practice guidance facilitates the realisation of children’s rights to safety and protection.

Practice guidance must be accompanied by professional development opportunities and space for critical reflection for practitioners, as well as the involvement of people with cultural authority. Creating space for reflective practice in collaboration with cultural experts will shift service system responses from being ethnocentric to culturally responsive (Kaur & Atkin, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This is a small-scale, qualitative study concerned with the understandings of practitioners working at the intersection of DFV and child protection. The study highlights the complexity of being child-centred and culturally responsive. Themes that emerged highlighted the importance of cultural awareness, the need to prioritise children, being family-focused and community-minded, and understanding the intersection of culture and gender. Practitioners clearly articulated that they navigate this complex practice terrain by being child-centred, but also navigate the cultural protocols and traditional gender roles to facilitate the protection of children. Practice guidance, professional development opportunities and connections with people with cultural authority will support best practice in this space.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research study was informed by the voices of practitioners. The authors would like to acknowledge and thank all the practitioners who gave up their time in their busy schedule to participate in the research. The knowledge that is in the report is infused with their knowledge, wisdom, and practice experience.
CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There are no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data generated for this research cannot be shared due to ethical and privacy issues of the participants who chose to participate. Sharing of data was not part of the informed consent process.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was granted ethical approval by the Flinders University Social and Behavioral Research Ethics committee. This was granted on 17 February 2020 (project number 8535).

NOTE

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have or have had an intimate relationship. The inclusion of ‘family’ in the terminology is in recognition of cultural diversity and that violence also occurs between family members, as well as between intimate partners. The terminology of ‘domestic and family violence’ is widely used in Australia (Seymour et al., 2023). This terminology is used throughout this article.

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How to cite this article: Keipert, S.-A. & Bastian, C. (2023) Understanding practice with culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people who have experienced domestic and family violence: A practitioner perspective. *Child Abuse Review*, e2852. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2852](https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2852)