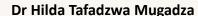# PARENTING IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Implications for raising children of African heritage within the Australian child protection context

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Migration, Acculturation, and the Child Protection System, African Migrant Communities in Australia

Archaic
CONSULTING GROUP
Culturally Competent Specialists in Child Protection

Acknowledgement of Country

Archaic Consulting Group acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

Overview

- The impact of migration on parenting and its flow-on effects on families and communities

- Migrants come from diverse cultural backgrounds where they maintain and observe cultural practices that influence their identities

- Despite COVID-19, data from the 2021 Australian census indicate that there continues to be an increase in the diversity of sub-Saharan African migration to Australia

- Upon settling in Australia, sub-Saharan African migrants are faced with a foreign society built on a child protection system that monitors how children are cared for and raised.

The questions to be answered are:

- How do sub-Saharan African pre-migration parenting practices fit within the Australian society and in particular within the child protection context?

- How do sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers negotiate cultural differences and conflicts as well as parenting expectations within the new cultural environment?
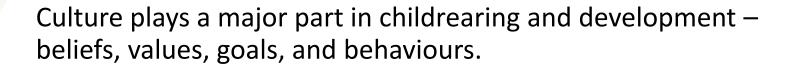
Culture and Child Protection

Broad child protection guidelines are in place to address culture related issues, but little is known about the extent to which the interventions in place meet the needs of sub-Saharan African migrant children [and their families].

Archaic professionals work in child protection environments that explore how sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers navigate parenting between the cultures that have shaped their lives and parenting expectations within the new [Australian] environment.

Archaic endeavors to provide evidence to inform the development and implementation of culturally appropriate and effective early intervention strategies for professionals working with migrant families within the Australia child protection system.

Pre- and Post-Migration Experiences

Culture plays a major part in childrearing and development – beliefs, values, goals, and behaviours.

People of African heritage are not the same, they are distinct, and their cultural norms are specific to their kin and ethnic group

What they have in common is, history, social, economic, political, linguistic and institutional similarities that allow for transferability on aspects pertaining to childrearing within the broader sub-Saharan African community (Ndofirepi and Shumba 2014).

Collectivism vs Individualism worldviews

Mostly, sub-Saharan African communities raise their children within a collectivist worldview

"We" as compared to "I" beliefs. A family system based on hierarchy as opposed to parent-child relationships that are more consultative and less hierarchical

Consequently, pre-migration parenting styles and practices of sub-Saharan African migrant families may be at odds with the mainstream parenting norms in Australia.

Acculturation

Upon settling in Australia, sub-Saharan African migrants undergo acculturation, and this may affect their childrearing practices.

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Acculturation refers to processes of cultural adjustments that occur due to prolonged contact between groups of people that are culturally different
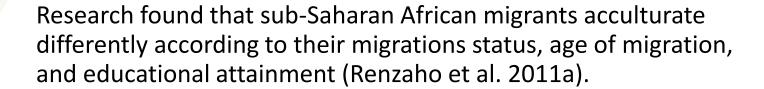
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Research has shown, however, that acquiring the beliefs, values, and practices of the host country does not automatically imply that migrants discard those of their country of origin (Schwartz et al. 2010), and a number of conceptual models of acculturation have been adopted in order to explain the changes that take place when different groups of people and individuals are interacting (Berry 1980; Kramer 2012).

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When engaging parents and caregivers of African heritage, at Archaic we focus on Berry's (1997, 2003) bi-dimensional model of acculturation which leads to four possible cultural orientations: (i) **integration**—incorporating both heritage and host cultures; (ii) **assimilation**—letting go of heritage culture in order to accept the host culture; (iii) **separation**—maintaining the heritage culture while rejecting the host culture; and (iv) **marginalisation**—being unable to maintain or embrace either cultures.

Acculturation – cont:

Research found that sub-Saharan African migrants acculturate differently according to their migrations status, age of migration, and educational attainment (Renzaho et al. 2011a).

Refugees and humanitarian entrants varied significantly, with 38% integrating, 34% experiencing marginalisation, 15% remaining traditional, and only 12% assimilating, compared with skilled migrants who had language proficiency and were highly educated, and hence favoured integration and assimilation.

It is with these differences in mind that child protection professionals should take time to understand the post-migration parenting practices among sub-Saharan African migrants and how parents and caregivers are negotiating cultural differences and conflicts within Australia.
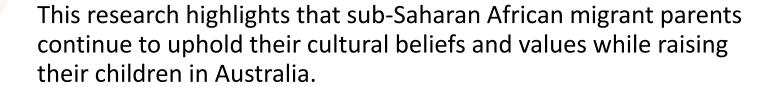
African-Australian Parents and Caregivers

What are sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers saying?

What are some of the challenges being experienced by sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers?

Implications

This research highlights that sub-Saharan African migrant parents continue to uphold their cultural beliefs and values while raising their children in Australia.

Culture is influenced by society and is responsive to the environment in which it is practised.

Migration studies have established that when the process of migration begins, change is inevitable in host societies and so often traditional systems and policy frameworks are challenged (Levitt 2004; Mazzucato and Schans 2011).

Child protection professionals need to be aware that sub-Saharan African migrants are active participants within social and legal processes in host nations.

What's next???

- Most parents believe that maintaining their cultural beliefs whilst making the effort to 'fit' into the Australian society has consequences for their children. The effects are also observed when children visit their native country.

  "When children visit back home, they relate to their family and peers based on what the Australian society teaches them. The community back home then looks at them as Australian because [they are] different. If they are not part of that community then it means they are part of the Australian community. This is very challenging for them because in Australia they are also being looked at as different" – sub-Saharan African migrant parent

1. We need to hear from children and young people of African heritage.

2. What are they experiencing within society and at home?

3. Are they understood or misunderstood?

4. How do they view their culture and what are their beliefs?

5. Who are they? How do they identify?

6. Do they belong? Where do they belong?

7. Etc…

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Our Services

Consultancy

Our consultancy involves and is not limited to the following services:

- Cultural Brokerage
- Complex Case Consultations
- Group Supervision
- Family Finding

Training

Our Training regime focuses on research-based practice and current social trends. We offer two types of training:

- Professional Training
- Relative/Kinship Carer Training (which incorporates Carer Support on a needs basis)

Assessments

Archaic offers insight through comprehesive assessments that capture target community post-migration parenting practices and experiences. We are best suited to complete the following assessments:

- Parenting Capacity Assessments
- Relative Kinship Carer Assessments
- Guardianship Assessments
- Permanency Assessments
- Carer Reviews

Family Group Conferencing

Although traditionally referred to by different names within various African settings, Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is an engagement process that may be beneficial to migrant families where cultural considerations are observed

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