What makes psychotherapy culturally responsive?
A scoping review of cultural adaptations and therapeutic processes

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Kate Beynon, Hong Kong born Australian artist with lived experiences of migration and navigating cultural identity. *Room of Lucky Charms* 2017

INTRODUCTION

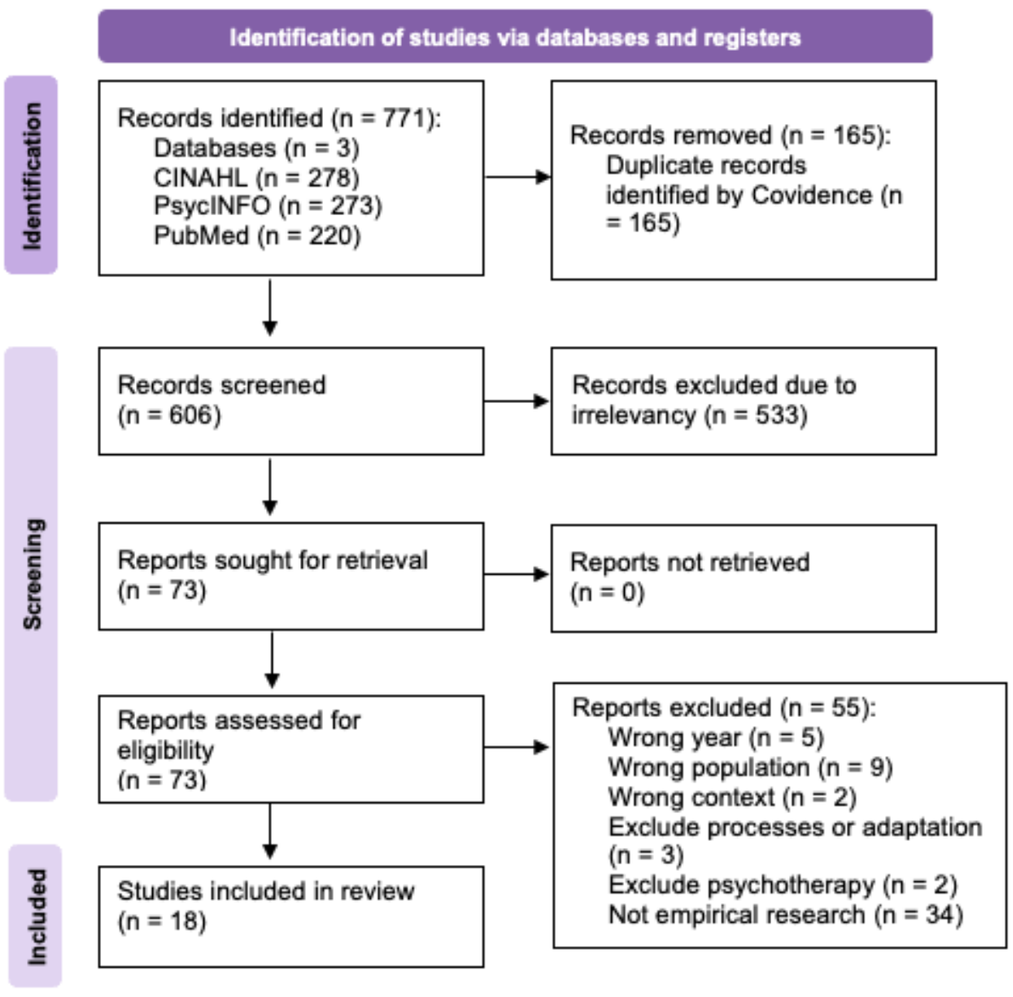
People from **culturally and linguistically diverse** (CALD) backgrounds show reduced and variable rates of mental health access despite complex mental health needs. Psychotherapy has largely developed within Western contexts, with cultural adaptations aiming to meet the needs of CALD populations. This research explores culturally responsive approaches to psychotherapy.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

What cultural adaptations and therapeutic processes contribute to culturally responsive psychotherapy for CALD populations?

METHOD

A scoping review was conducted using JBI methodology. Studies between 2016 and 2026 were identified through CINAHL, PsycINFO and PubMed, with screening tool, using Covidence. Data from included studies were extracted and thematically synthesised to identify recurring themes in cultural adaptations and therapeutic processes.



RESULT

The evidence was predominantly qualitative, with small sample sizes. Studies represented diverse migrant, refugee, international student and ethnic minority populations.

18 included studies	8 CBT	1 Australian study	Over 50% Qualitative

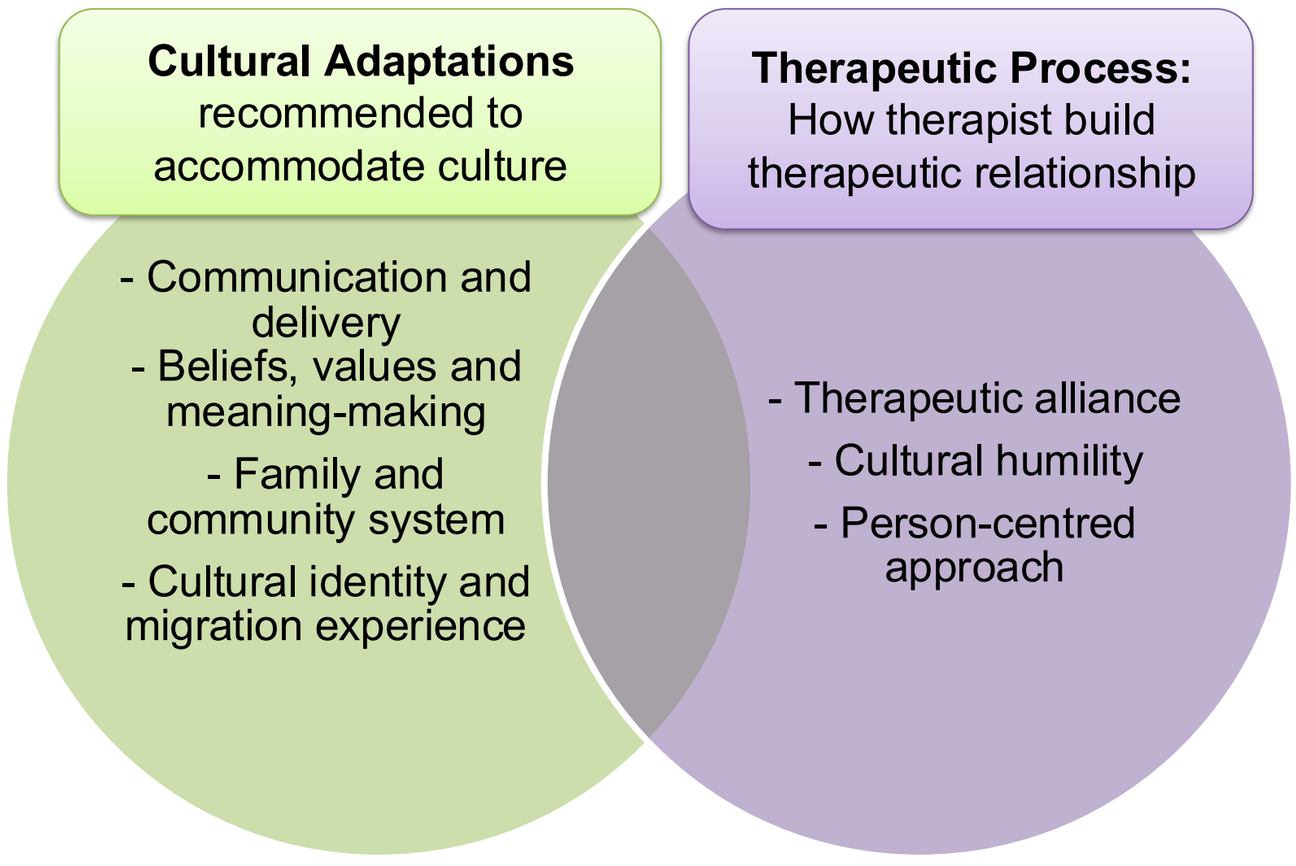
Thematic key findings:

Trust and cultural humility
Therapists' curiosity, flexibility and non-judgemental approach may be more important than cultural matching.

Interpreters can do more than translate
They may also act as a cultural co-facilitator and mediation to support therapeutic relationship.

Cultural context expands beyond individual
Migration experience, family and community may influence the therapeutic engagement

Thematic Synthesis::



RECOMMENDATION & IMPLICATIONS

Clinical practice:
Culturally responsive psychotherapy requires flexibility, cultural humility and collaboration – not-a one-size-fits-all approach.

Future research:
Further Australian research is needed to understand CALD experiences across different psychotherapy approaches.

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