

The World in WAIMH: A Reflective Space

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In A Community Service Clinical Psychologist Reflects on a Parenting Skills Workshop in Nolongile Clinic in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, Dr. Thembelihle Dube puts us squarely before the clash of Western constructs of mental illness, treatment, and therapist-patient roles with those of other cultures. We wonder how to understand what these words - psychologist, therapy, psychoeducation, mental illness, parenting skills, and others - mean here. What explanatory models do parents, professionals, and the children themselves invoke to understand a child's distress, disorganization or disruptive behavior?

Dr. Dube concludes that parents benefit from the opportunity to stop and reflect on the meanings of their children's behavior. Yet she herself believes that their materially impoverished and traumatic environment explains much of it. But then, what role for psychological formulations and treatment? What is the right balance between reflection and action? What is the place of parenting skills and stress management when there is food insecurity, homelessness, and trauma all around? Dr. Dube suggests that it is not 'either or', but, instead, 'both and': we might guess that parents' small successes in understanding and reaching their children help empower them to take on the larger challenges they face.



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