

# Exploring beliefs about and influences on family-centred approaches to practice: a mixed methods study

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## BACKGROUND

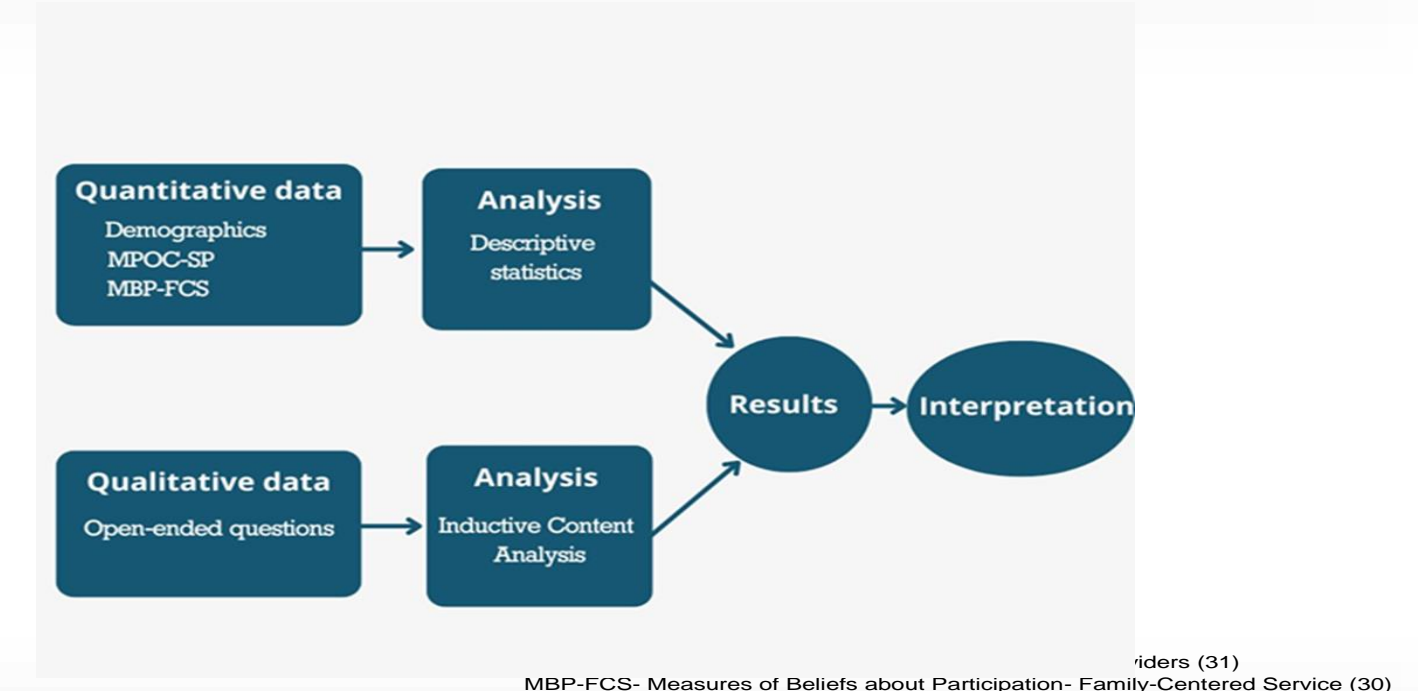
- Family-centred service (FCS), which aims to build family capacity to support their children, is widely accepted as best-practice in childhood disability<sup>1</sup>.
- The willingness and ability of service providers (SPs) to work in family-centred ways is influenced by many factors including contextual, professional, and personal variables. While best practice guidelines in early childhood intervention exist, perceptions and interpretations of these may vary.
- Despite evidence supporting FCS, SP behaviours in practice are not always aligned with FCS

## AIMS

- To explore SP beliefs about FCS, and what influences the way SPs think about and approach FCS with children with child-onset disabilities and their families.

## METHOD

This mixed methods study used a concurrent convergent design to draw on the experience, beliefs, and perspectives of a broad range of SPs, using survey methods (Figure 1).



## RESULTS AND SYNTHESIS

- Participants -73 medical and AH professionals in Australia.
- Participant reported positive beliefs about the principles and benefits of FCS, positive self-efficacy in their ability to implement FCS but less positive beliefs about the practical feasibility of FCS.
- Family-centred behaviours were perceived as important but were not always easy to implement in practice.
- There were no observed differences in beliefs, perceptions, or behaviours between those with different professional training, experience, or work contexts.

### Themes describing how participants perceived the way they work, how this is influenced

Four themes described how participants perceived the way they work and what influenced this (figure 2).

- *Collaborative partnerships as a way of working together* provided a foundation for working.
- The influences on participants' ways of working related to (1) *Who I am*, (2) *How I perceive influences beyond me*, with 2 subthemes (i) *my context*, and (ii) *those around me*, and that (3) *Overlapping values and priorities supports sustained motivation*
- SPs perceptions of their ways of working were influenced by how they understood FCS.

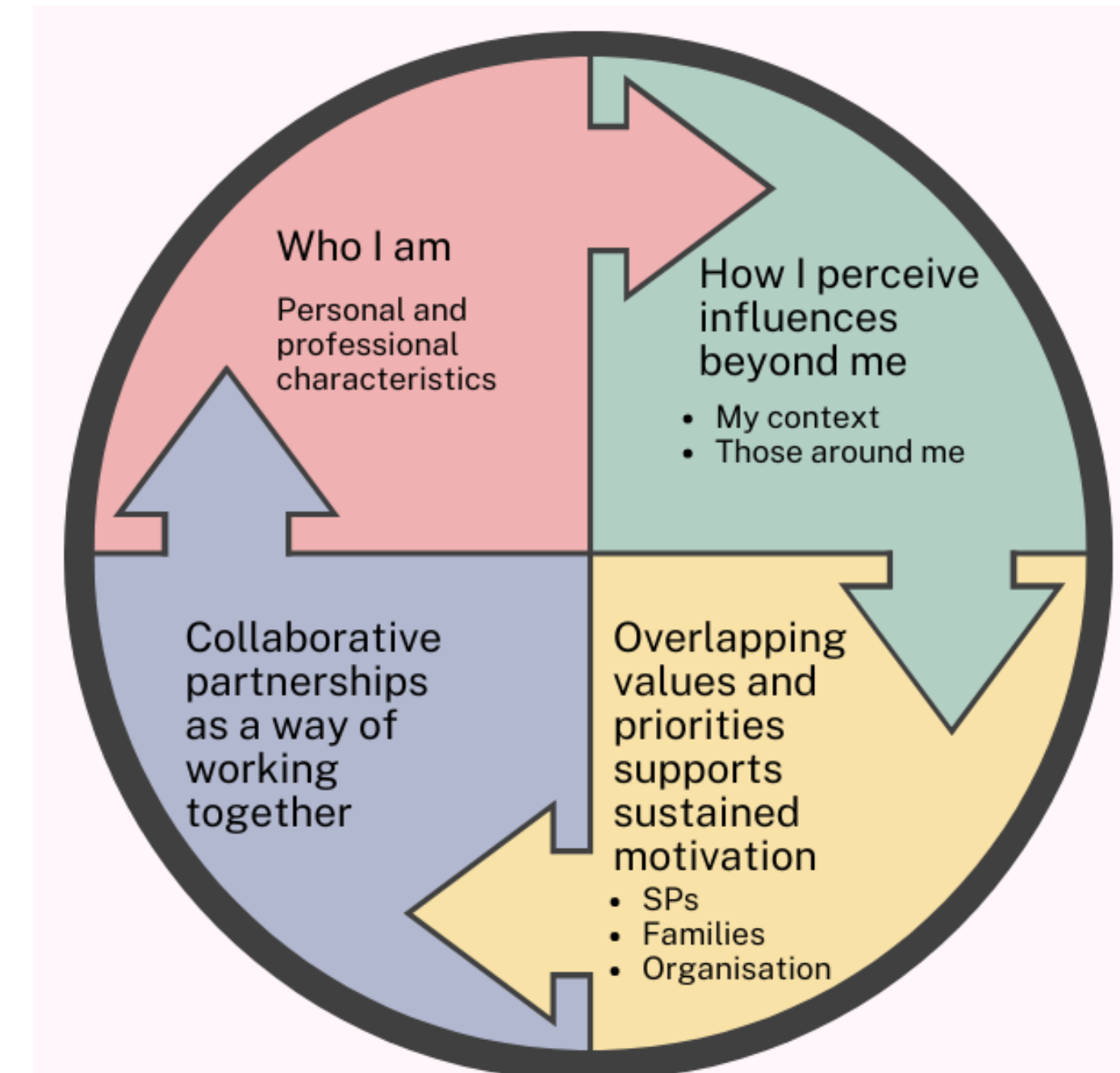


Figure 2. SP perceptions of approaches to and influences on their work

### What FCS is to service providers

Participants described their understanding of FCS as a way of being, knowing and/or doing. 'A way of being' was aligned with affective knowledge, or 'knowing why'. 'A way of knowing' was aligned with cognitive knowledge, or 'knowing what'. 'A way of doing' was aligned with behavioural knowledge, or 'knowing how' (figure 3).

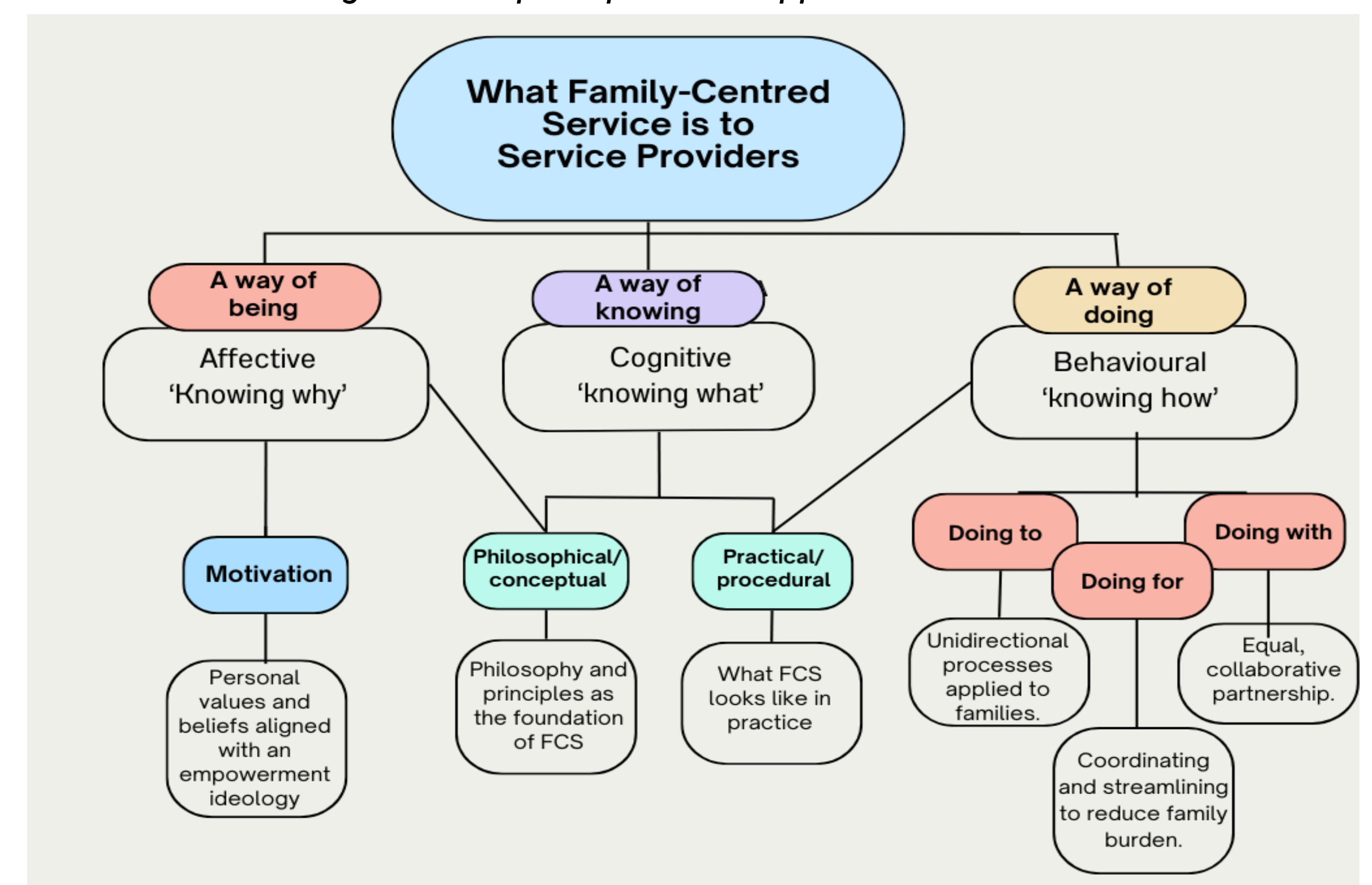


Figure 3. What FCS is to SPs

## Summary:

- Findings indicated that providers 'way of knowing' influenced their 'way of doing'.
- Development of SPs skills as reflective practitioners will support them to move beyond 'doing to' and 'doing for' families towards 'doing with' families.
- Organisational provision of time and support for reflective practice is a strategy that can promote SPs 'doing with' families.

Education to align service providers' understanding of family-centred service with contemporary evidence, and strategies tailored to each context are required to support providers to balance competing priorities for themselves, families they work with and surrounding services and systems and sustain and promote family-centred service in practice.

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