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Kinship and Cultural Strengths—Learning from an Aboriginal Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Kinship is core to Aboriginal culture, values and wellbeing. However, the strength of culture and relationships is often not fully recognised or respected by Westernised systems. This article highlights cultural strengths through use of a detailed case study narrative illustrating the importance of community self-determination when an Aboriginal child needs to be relocated to other carers/family members. Situated within an Aboriginal participatory action research methodology, we utilised a case study method where a participant and co-author (*Amelia) collaborated with two academics to tell her story as an illustration of the strengths of community and kinship that can support vulnerable children. Through this partnership we learn the importance of Aboriginal community involvement in Amelia's progression from early childhood experience of family violence to thriving young adulthood. We confirm the importance of including Aboriginal knowledges and practices in raising at-risk Aboriginal children and we contribute to social work practice knowledges by learning from Indigenous experience. We conclude that social work needs to build on the strengths of Aboriginal communities' abilities by valuing kinship support systems.

IMPLICATIONS

- When faced with adversity such as family violence, Aboriginal culture can be a protective factor.
- Social workers need to understand the importance of culture in the healing process for Aboriginal children.
- Keeping Aboriginal children connected to culture is paramount for long-term recovery and the ability to create healthy relationships.

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Social Work; Indigenous
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Kinship Care

Situating the Study

In this article we aimed to contribute to knowledge by providing a positive discourse, shining light on learning from Aboriginal experiences, specifically Amelia's lived experience.

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Historically, in scholarly literature there have been negative narratives and known modes of thinking, which frame and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through deficit discourses (Fforde et al., 2013). Western epistemology dominates social discourses, shaping and constraining perspectives of Aboriginal peoples. These discourses fall short in understanding Aboriginal culture and strengths of Country (Bennett & Green, 2019). Bennett and Green (2019) argued that only through deliberate effort to truly listen and observe can there be a move beyond deficit discourse.

This article is a positive narrative, co-authored by *Amelia Smith (a pseudonym for a young Aboriginal woman) in collaboration with both an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal Australian researcher. Amelia contributed her life experience as the basis for the case study and had overview of the written case study. Amelia then participated throughout the writing process.

As an Aboriginal woman from the Kamilaroi nation and an academic, Jamie Sorby brought her cultural insights and perspectives to the research process and completed the background research into the issues raised by Amelia's story. As an ally and a non-Indigenous senior academic, Dr Fiona Buchanan interviewed Amelia and supported her involvement in the project, along with supporting Jamie Sorby in her early academic career. Jamie and Fiona worked collaboratively with Amelia to produce this article. Amelia's story is central to this article and points to kinship and aspects of the Aboriginal community that have contributed to her cultural strengths, healthy development, and ability to thrive despite early years exposure to family violence and neglect.

The resulting article offers insights into how an Aboriginal family and community assisted in the growth and development of a child, emerging from adversity into a young adult able to make discerning choices for herself and contribute to her own community and broader society. The article highlights cultural strengths and approaches that Amelia valued, and that can contribute to informing policy and practice. We believe such cultural strengths can help children reach their full potential. This article not only explores the resilience and cultural strengths within Aboriginal communities but also provides a nuanced understanding of Amelia's story from adversity to empowerment. The following sections will explore aspects of Aboriginal kinship and discuss culture, colonisation, and impacts of violence. The action research methodology and case study method are described, followed by Amelia's lived experience story and the discussion. In conclusion, we draw on Amelia's experiences to recommend greater integration of Aboriginal knowledges in social work practice with children. We advocate for tailored approaches that recognise the value of Aboriginal kinship systems in nurturing resilience and wellbeing among Aboriginal children facing adversity.

Kinship

In Australian Aboriginal communities, kinship is a culturally constructed system that is both complex and sophisticated, extending back many generations (Langton, 2023; Morphy, 2006; Riley, 2014a). Although there are many different kinship systems worldwide, each with unique sets of names and structures, they all serve to bind people together. However, the diversity of Aboriginal kinship systems in Australia stands out as being far more complex than any Westernised kinship system, as described by Langton (2023).

Rose (2008) explained kinship systems are understood through culturally defined kin relations to others, including consanguineal (blood relations) and extending to encompass all aspects of Aboriginal society. Langton (2023) further described the social structure of kinship, identifying that each person is born into a kinship system, tracing connections both through past generations and laterally. This lateral aspect of kinship includes familial relationships and extends to non-biological connections such as close friendship. Within these relationships, terms such as “brother” and “sister” are commonly used, symbolising respect and connection beyond biological ties (Langton, 2023).

Understanding kinship as a collectivist system allows for the comprehension of differing aspects in connections, specifically around shared child-rearing obligations and responsibilities (Lohoar et al., 2014). Guiding beliefs and attitudes of child-rearing practices differ across Aboriginal communities, with common underlying values within kinship systems ensuring community cohesion in working together for the common goal of enabling children to thrive (Lohoar et al., 2014). As Kelly and McConvell (2018) argued, kinship in contemporary Aboriginal society has evolved over time due to colonisation, and kinship now varies across Aboriginal nations depending on the level of colonial influence. Yet despite colonisation, many Aboriginal kinship systems are still present today and have maintained many cultural concepts and beliefs (Kelly & McConvell, 2018). Cultural obligations and purpose are determined through positioning within the kinship system, with specific obligations such as providing psychological and emotional support to certain people (Riley, 2014a).

Culture, Colonisation, and Impacts of Violence

Prior to colonisation, Aboriginal cultural practices included preventative strategies against certain behaviours, which were enforced by Elders through cultural lore, instilling fear of punishment within community. However, in contemporary Aboriginal society, many communities find it challenging to maintain lore, due to Elders’ authority being undermined by Western law and governance (Blagg et al., 2020). Cripps (2008) identified a multitude of inter-relating components with family violence, including colonisation, government policies, dispossession of land and culture, removal of families, marginalisation, racism, welfare dependence, history of abuse, and sense of powerlessness. Elsewhere Braybrook (2015) identified living with intergenerational trauma, removal of children, discrimination, mental health, poverty, disability, and family violence-driven housing instability as contributing to higher incidences of family violence in Aboriginal communities. Atkinson (2002) explained the six-generation traumagram, linking historical events of colonisation on Aboriginal lands, and how this has contributed to increased rates of family violence and family breakdown. Atkinson continued that by tracing back generational impacts of colonisation, it was evident that unacknowledged and unresolved trauma experienced in previous generations has a link to later generations and extended family experiencing dysfunction in their lives.

The preponderance of family violence is devastating, with Indigenous women being 32 times more likely to be hospitalised compared to non-Indigenous women, while Indigenous children are seven times more likely to be subjected to substantiated child abuse or neglect compared to non-Indigenous children (Australian Institute of Health and

Welfare, 2018). Many Aboriginal women are further impacted upon by resistance in sharing experiences of family violence (Davis, 2012), as this can be detrimental to safety and wellbeing. Yet as Andrews et al. (2022) stated, hiding traumas conceals evidence of resilience and capabilities from Aboriginal women's standpoints.

When looking at the issues of family violence in Aboriginal communities, respect and understanding needs to be forefront, while prioritising culture and lore as the foundations in maintaining social order, continuation of culture, and harmonious relationships within communities (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1986). Atkinson (2002) asserted that family violence needs to be recognised as an offence against both the community and the individual, with community participation being critical in breaking the continuation of trauma and the cycle of violence occurring. Further, Blagg et al. (2020) recommended Aboriginal dispute resolution and cultural processes should be utilised first when addressing family violence, followed by the Westernised systems (Blagg et al., 2020). The complex issue of family violence in Aboriginal communities highlights the need for culturally considered solutions. Therefore, there is a need to understand cultural processes more deeply, particularly strengths of kinship, which contribute to addressing and healing the impacts of family violence.

Strengths of Kinship

To understand Aboriginal culture in practice, it is essential to comprehend the strengths of kinship and the role in Aboriginal wellbeing. Concepts of health and wellbeing extend beyond individual physical health of a person to include the wellbeing of community through social, emotional, and cultural elements relevant to communities (Hunter et al., 2021). Having a culturally healthy community is correlated with the presence of strengths of social and emotional wellbeing domains including community governance, self-determination, continuity of culture, connection to Country, culture, spirituality, family, community, and ancestry (Gee et al., 2014; Hunter et al., 2021). These factors, termed cultural determinants of health, are centred around an Indigenous definition of health (Verbunt et al., 2021). Strengths do not necessarily arise from the absence of distress in a person's life; rather, they are positive outcomes that develop when a person experiences adversity or stress with support around them (Gorman et al., 2021), such as kinship. Strengths of a child or adult can be explained by their social, psychological, cultural, and physical resources, which enable them to sustain wellbeing through culturally meaningful actions (Hunter et al., 2021). When a child is provided with cultural strengths within their kinship environment, they develop culturally protective capabilities such as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Development of cultural strengths allows cultural connections to continue to thrive and is evident in the wellbeing of a person in adulthood (Hunter et al., 2021).

Theoretical understandings of kinship strengths are reflected in real-life experiences by Peter Gibbs, a Gamilaroi man. Gibbs provided practical examples of kinship strengths through his cultural learnings, which he said come from listening to "Old People", and realising responsibilities Aboriginal people have to community (Gibbs, 2014). Gibbs' reflections highlighted the crucial role of Elders and the transmission of "oral" knowledge in maintaining the "structure" of communities. Gibbs described structure as encompassing responsibilities of providing things such as a safe bed for children to sleep in,

opportunities for school, education, work, and continuing to pass down and share knowledge from Old People. By imparting oral knowledge, support, and structure to children, a new paradigm can be opened for young people to realise their responsibilities to others and community. This can strengthen young people's confidence and self-esteem through the passing down of knowledges from Elders of their cultural responsibilities, which in turn supports wellbeing and fosters cultural continuity within communities (Haines et al., 2017; Priest et al., 2012). Gibbs noted that when things "fall away", the structure is shattered, and this is where such things as domestic violence in Aboriginal community originate. Things that "fall away" may include the passing of Elders before they can pass on knowledge or removal of children from their families, resulting in discontinuation of culture (Gibbs, 2014; Haines et al., 2017). Gibbs emphasised the importance of kinship in fostering resilience, cultural continuity, and community strength, despite challenges such as family violence and cultural dislocation (Gibbs, 2014). Such implications of kinship in Aboriginal communities differ significantly from Westernised notions of family and kinship. These differences now will be examined to better understand the contrasting views.

How Family and Kinship Differ

Kinship systems and Aboriginal perspectives on support and wellbeing for children differ significantly from Westernised interpretations. Seminal work by Morphy (2006) revealed that Western mainstream culture imposed and embedded views that the "nuclear" family is the natural and accepted building block of societies, with all other forms seen as deviations. When considering terms of kin in the nuclear family, there is no translatable term of Aboriginal kinship, and vice versa, as the kinship system privileges lineages, not individualisation (Morphy, 2006). A clear example of the contrasting interpretation is provided by Lynette Riley, a Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi woman and Aboriginal academic (Riley, 2014b). Riley described "the strength of a system", whereby in an Aboriginal cultural context an only child will never be an only child, as all children will have many mothers, fathers, and siblings. To interpret this concept through a Westernised understanding, aunts and uncles have equal and reciprocal relationships with nieces and nephews, and cousins are equal to siblings (Riley, 2014b). This example illustrates that when Aboriginal young people are surrounded by kinship, they are encircled by the strength of extensive family relationships.

Understanding the extended and inclusive nature of Aboriginal kinship, as highlighted by Lynette Riley's and Peter Gibbs' insights, we turn to the methodology and method utilised for this article.

Method

Research Design

Action Research

Drawing on systems theory, the participatory research ethos adopted in this case study values collaboration and partnership between a lived experience participant in research and co-authors with formal academic knowledge and experience. In such cases,

participants and academics construct knowledge through collaborative learning and learning from each other. Each member of the research team contributes from their knowledge base and learns from other experiences. Subjectivity and involvement through the research writing process seeks to validate each participant's and each researcher's contribution and to construct a view based on the knowledge of all involved (Ackerly & True, 2019).

Situated within an Aboriginal participatory action research (Dudgeon et al., 2020) methodology, we used Amelia's case study as the basis of incorporating an Indigenous knowledge system from a young Aboriginal participant's perspective. As a team, Amelia, Jamie, and Fiona worked together to construct this article. The case study presented here emerged from an Aboriginal-focused component of a qualitative study where 203 young people who had grown up in domestic violence identified factors that helped them create healthy relationships (Buchanan et al., 2023).

Data Analysis

Data from the mainstream study were thematically analysed for this article, following an online survey response and a life history interview, conducted by Zoom, and with Amelia's agreement, a draft of her case study was written and shared with her. Amelia then edited and contributed further to the written draft. At this stage Amelia agreed to co-author this article and contribute by reviewing and collaborating on the analysis of her life story. In this way, in her role as co-author, Amelia contributed from her perceptions and experiences, and viewed her situation within the context of literature that describes aspects of Aboriginal culture.

The objective was to utilise Amelia's story as an illustration of Aboriginal cultural values in practice. In doing so we present a culturally safe community response to a child affected by family violence. Regarding social research, Savin-Baden and Major (2023) noted, "case study research is a research approach that examines the relationships between people and structures in which they work, live and learn" (p. 168). The case study method is seen as of value in this instance because it is used to illustrate an Aboriginal community's approach to child safety that can inform and enrich the lives of children. This can then be used to enhance social work practice by allowing social workers to gain insight regarding helpful practices in an Aboriginal community. When utilising a case study in research, the case is seen to have the capacity to be informative about an issue that impacts a wider constellation of cases in context (Engel & Schutt, 2016).

Ethics Approval

Prior to Amelia's involvement, the study plan and design were devised in partnership with an Aboriginal consultant who conferred with key Aboriginal organisations, paying particular attention to culturally appropriate engagement processes and distress protocols. Ethics was then approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, University of South Australia, and the Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee (AHREC) of the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia. Informed consent was discussed with Amelia prior to her interview and again when she was invited to co-author this article. Support was offered during Zoom meetings, as well as phone and email contact, and existing local supports for

Amelia were identified. The need to use a pseudonym for Amelia and ensure anonymity for herself, her family, and communities was discussed.

The Case Study: Amelia's Lived Experience

Amelia is an Aboriginal woman in her early 20s who lived with her birth parents for some of her early formative years and then periodically. Some of the demographic details have deliberately been loosely defined to protect anonymity. During this time, she endured domestic abuse between her parents and amongst other adults within the environment. Amelia reported that treatment of her siblings also included neglect. She sees herself as sustaining significant residual effects from having witnessed physical and emotional abuse within the family home and as being troubled by ongoing tension and disputes. She experienced inadequate care due to the ongoing effects of substance abuse and family abuse, which left her with “a lack of trust and safety in others”. When she was in middle childhood Amelia went to live with her maternal grandparents. One grandparent was Aboriginal and the other was fully supportive of Aboriginal cultural practices, including Amelia being immersed within the Aboriginal community.

As a young adult, Amelia worked in human (community) service provision and describes herself as self-educated by her life experiences and by being an avid reader who immerses herself in literature that informs her work and her self-exploration. Through her personal life and her work, she has come across many domestic abuse situations, and because of her own and her clients' experiences, she believes it is important to be involved in study and research in this area. Amelia currently lives with family members. She has a tertiary level education and works full-time.

Amelia identified her grandparents as significant role models, particularly in demonstrating what a healthy relationship looks and feels like. She also emphasised the importance of connection with Aboriginal culture and community through her grandparents, extended family, and Aboriginal friendship groups—most notably in the early years. Amelia saw her education, relationships with teachers, and involvement in an Aboriginal Children's Centre in her primary school years as affirming:

So, kinship the thing we call the kinship model now, back then as a child I didn't realise but as I've grown up and insight takes hold, that's what my grandparents were doing with my siblings and I. They stepped in, raised us, and took that responsibility when it was needed—they didn't need to do that. They had support by their friends and extended families and staff at the Aboriginal Children's Centre that we attended. We had additional day care for very, very low cost because both my grandparents were low-income earners. But it sort of morphed into an informal agreement and model of care. The carers would check in with my grandparents' wellbeing too. So, the day-carers that we had, I still am in contact with them to this day.

Amelia described how Aboriginal child-care staff would take her and her siblings home for sleepovers to give her grandparents respite—something she identifies as not possible in Westernised formal systems. As Amelia described her upbringing: “it was like being raised by a village”. She mentioned how respect was embedded in her immediate family and within the present wider Aboriginal community, given and received between Elders, younger people, and children, and this still influences her behaviour to this day.

Amelia described her ongoing relationship with the sister who was closest to her in age and how growing up together and being close in age meant that everything they experienced, they experienced together. Amelia and her sister still talk about some of their past life experiences openly but with vulnerability. Amelia describes her relationship with her sister as healthy and close.

Having indicated that reciprocal respect is important to her, Amelia went on to state that she does not respect anyone who does not respect her, regardless of their level of authority. Amelia defines respectful behaviour as firstly, making space to listen and being present for the other person, not judging or jumping to conclusions. She also mentioned the need to avoid problem solving for people but being prepared to sit with them as they problem solve for themselves. Amelia expects to demonstrate and be shown respect in her personal relationships as well as work situations. However, this has not always been present in partnership relationships. She added that she feels she has had few adult romantic relationships because of her relational standards that have become non-negotiable. She spoke about earlier relationships that were going well until she saw “red flags” when partners did not treat her respectfully. Amelia remembered one relationship where her idea of a healthy relationship was quite different from her partner’s. This partner became quite controlling and Amelia found it took time to extricate herself from the relationship, ultimately blocking the person from all real-life and social media connections. She recalls feeling quite overwhelmed at the time and, given that it took time for her to realise how she was being manipulated, she sees herself as more apprehensive about potential partners now. However, Amelia recognises that this experience helped her to understand that she can leave an unsuitable relationship despite pressure to stay.

In another past relationship that Amelia described as healthy, she talked about how both she and her partner were able to negotiate calmly through points of conflict, not descending to shouting and screaming when there were differences. Safety and trust were present in that relationship as she and her partner “unravelling different layers” of each other. In this relationship two-way communication was open and honest as they learned more about each other. The relationship ended because of different life stages and desires moving forward and all contact ceased.

Amelia perceives that from her early experiences of living with domestic abuse and strained relationships with her birth parents, she had learned a pattern of being alternatively warm and loving, then resorting to cold, undemonstrative behaviour. She believes that fear of depending on someone leads her to create distance and shut down communication. However, the relationship with her maternal grandparents (primary caregivers) modelled quite the opposite and this, Amelia feels, was essential in unlearning and relearning about relationships. In healthy relationships, her way of managing the old patterns of behaviour that may arise is to be open and honest, discussing this tendency with her partner. She recognises that this may require repeated conversations to address issues as they arise. However, at present, Amelia is content being single and feels safe and empowered in that space.

When considering her adult relationships with reference to her early years of living with domestic abuse, Amelia felt that her path would have been eased if a counsellor who was conversant with childhood trauma had been available to her. As a child, she saw counsellors, but felt that they did not deal with what she had endured or the

effects of witnessing domestic abuse. As Amelia said, most of the counselling felt superficial and just like playing, and she took nothing substantial from those sessions. She feels that counsellors needed to take time to get past the major trust issues she had and “take time to prod a little bit harder to ... see past the front I was presenting”. Amelia believes that child counsellors need to address the effects of more than witnessing physical abuse and take account of the damaging effects of children hearing abuse and imagining what is happening, to understand the effects of witnessing coercive control, gaslighting, and other abusive behaviours on children. As she said, “you wouldn’t have the words at that age, or even growing up, you wouldn’t have the words to describe that. And if other people aren’t laying it out to you, you wouldn’t know it was abusive.”

Apart from educating herself about all aspects of abuse, as a young adult Amelia has found a counsellor who takes a trauma approach and helps her “self-exploration”, affirming that she is not mad but instead is having rational responses that are normal given her past experiences. Amelia describes this counsellor as carefully listening and normalising her thoughts and reactions for her. Despite initial distrust and unsuccessful interactions with past counsellors, Amelia has been seeing this counsellor for two years.

When asked what she thinks would be useful for Aboriginal children growing up with violence now, Amelia spoke about the complexity for children living in some communities where they see domestic abuse all around them and the level of normalisation of that abuse. Yet she thought that removing these children was not always the answer as there is the risk of disconnecting them from their culture. She wishes that all Aboriginal children could have a positive Aboriginal role model to learn from so that they can know what feeling warm and safe is like, particularly if they have experienced disconnect and a level of detachment from their birth parents. She thinks that being surrounded by violence where there is no safety has impacts on children’s learning and development. Having said that, Amelia also believes that education about domestic violence, including information about all its interconnected and complex layers, might help. She mentioned education in school, but also public education and education in informal settings like football teams and other recreational groups would be of benefit in normalising and demonstrating the basis of healthy relationships. She believes there is a need to train all staff members in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations to know about trauma and its effects: “Anybody dealing with people should be trauma informed.”

And when we talk about the whole of self, when you’re Aboriginal, there’s just more depth and connection that comes into it that doesn’t necessarily come into any westernised cultures, I guess. And the identity thing is massive, and the importance of community and culture is massive, but it all intertwines into your whole of self. So, I guess in some contexts when we talk about the self, we’re talking about obviously one person. But in Aboriginal culture historically and traditionally we’re always usually talking about more than one. Connected to the country, connected to the land, connected to the sea, the skies. You’re talking always about more than just one. And I guess that coexists with the human existence in its essence, it’s multilayered and it’s not black and white. There’s always multiple things that flow into the river of ‘us’.

With this in mind, Amelia believes training about domestic violence and its effects on children should be taught and modelled by all adults in society. She sees the role of

healthy adults, healthy community, and kinship care as pivotal to her growing up able to discern what is healthy and what is abusive.

Discussion

Cultural strengths in kinship and community, as identified by Hunter et al. (2021) and Gee et al. (2014), are evident throughout Amelia's experience. Her grandparents, their supportive friends, extended family, and Aboriginal community centre staff all played a role in supporting Amelia to overcome adversity. As noted by Muir and Bohr (2019), extended family, including grandparents, play a crucial role in cultural teaching and nurturing of Aboriginal children. Amelia recognised that as a child, she did not understand "kinship", but can now articulate the impact it had on her life. Growing up surrounded by kinship, in line with the definition by Hunter et al. (2021), Amelia described a culturally healthy community, and firsthand experience of the importance of connection with Aboriginal culture and community. Cultural obligations and kinship responsibilities, with the purpose of supporting and caring for Amelia, represents "the strength of a system" (Riley, 2014b).

Amelia explained that her experience of family violence and neglect as a child has left her with residual effects of having a lack of trust and safety in others. However, despite these challenges Amelia found a culturally safe environment through kinship supports, which ultimately provided the opportunity to safely learn and develop strengths in handling challenges and stress, including the ability to negotiate through conflict. Amelia believes that her kinship experiences as a child have helped her grow into an adult who can create healthy relationships, despite her experiences of family violence as a child, emphasising the importance of respect, and how this was embedded in her kinship care. The meaning of respect was given and received between Elders, young people, and children, and Amelia stated respect is something that still influences her behaviour today, and an important aspect of her thinking about relationships. This relates to Gibbs' explanation that sharing knowledges, support, and structure with children can open a new paradigm (Gibbs, 2014). Amelia's story further emphasises the power of cultural strengths, adaptability, and community support, which has influenced the choices she makes today. Following Hunter et al.'s (2021) analysis of cultural well-being, Amelia's kinship connections continue as cultural obligations, providing culturally safe and supportive environments for her to thrive in.

In presenting Amelia's story, we contribute to an emerging body of literature that provides cultural narratives to inform social work practice with children and families. Her narrative of strength in kinship and community, alongside her personal resilience, offers an essential perspective and insight into understandings of Aboriginal experiences. The insights from Amelia's experience have significant implications for social work. A better understanding and appreciation of what Aboriginal communities offer in support of children who have suffered abuse will enable social workers to collaborate more effectively with families and communities. Learning from Aboriginal communities can promote a positive contribution, recognising the vital role of Aboriginal peoples and communities in social welfare. The healing process for Aboriginal children is intertwined with culture. Westernised social work systems must gain a better understanding and nurture culturally protective capabilities, such as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and

self-confidence. Recognising the importance of culture is key to the effective healing and development of Aboriginal children. Finally, policy should orientate towards encouraging social workers to engage and build trust with Aboriginal communities, including honouring cultural knowledge and working in partnership. Such policy shifts can facilitate more effective and culturally sensitive interventions in cases of family violence.

Conclusion

Amelia's description of her "kinship model" experience exemplifies the cultural obligations upheld by her family members and community that fostered her cultural strengths. This article identifies strengths in Aboriginal culture that present protective factors for children. The insights gained from the literature and Amelia's story lead us to believe that maintaining a connection to culture is crucial for Aboriginal children who endure family violence. Therefore, it is imperative that social workers, support systems, and policy makers not only understand but actively incorporate Aboriginal cultural processes into their approaches. This means devising strategies that prioritise cultural connections and integrate Aboriginal kinship principles, ensuring that responses to Aboriginal children in need are culturally informed and conducive to healing and wellbeing.

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