

The second edition of Jilya and Part II is focused on trauma and attachment. This edition is a bumper issue and became bigger than we had intended. This is mostly a reflection on two things. First, that there are many programs in Australia which are operating to provide trauma informed services to Aboriginal clients and their families. Some of these programs have been evaluated, some have not. Second, what is clear is that there is a limited empirical, research driven framework for the Aboriginal specific development of programs which have explored a different aetiology for trauma and attachment disorders with Aboriginal people. This edition is a reflection of both of these realities. What is clear however is that the drive to develop Indigenous specific programs and to address attachment disorders that are specific to an Aboriginal view of parental attachment and bonds is a passion that seems to motivate most of us who work in the trauma related fields. What is a little unclear is how this is best achieved. It is of note that the statistics around Aboriginal health and wellbeing mask the reality that the vast majority of government spending is still geared towards providing services 'after the event' rather than focused upon early intervention and prevention.

For instance whilst we know that 35% of Aboriginal children remain in foster care in this country (10 times the rate of non-Indigenous children) what is not known is the contribution of removal policies and racism to this ongoing risk.

Related to this is that we do not fully understand how cultural connection is able to buffer risk factors for the development of trauma and attachment disorders. The available research indicates that culture is a

Managing Directors Report

November 2016

significant moderator of risk.

In this edition of Jilya we propose a number of assessment tools and models which enable the articulation of culture and identity as methods of increasing individual and community robustness to such challenges. I also know that communities which are culturally 'intact' seem to do much better in their overall mental health outcomes than those that feel the impacts of cultural change as cultural stress. There has, however, been a lack of ability to gauge cultural connectedness and we discuss this fully in part two of the featured article on trauma and attachment. Not surprisingly, I have long argued that Aboriginal parenting styles are optimum for healthy childhood development. Many of the worlds leading experts on attachment in particular now agree (e.g. Bruce Perry).

The concept that is that it takes a whole community to raise a child is not new. However, what it means is that collectivist cultures such as Aboriginal cultures seem to have an advantage in developing secure attachment in their children. I wonder then that if we explored two different cohorts – those Aboriginal communities who have for the most part retained collectivist parenting styles compared to those Aboriginal communities who have not – what differences we would find.

I believe it is the forced transition (through assimilation and removal policies) which have resulted in a loss of parenting role models that



would account for a significant amount of these differences. Operationalising the strengths in Aboriginal parenting styles and developing programs which incorporate these would certainly provide a good starting point to prevention of intergenerational trauma and attachment disorders.

Unfortunately, given the lack of research validation of this view of collectivist cultures having more strengths in child rearing than Eurocentric ones, the mindset regarding the 'lack of capacity' of Aboriginal parents to parent our children continues. The result is that we are continuing to witness an entire generation being raised away from their biological parents. Despite this knowledge it is disturbing that over 65% of the child protection budget (or \$2.2 billion) is being spent on placing children in out-of-home care services. Unfortunately programs that prevent removal in the first place are virtually non-existent and they certainly do not meet the category of early intervention. This refers specifically to programs that address parental bonds and attachment and risk associated with attachment disorders and post trauma in parents. This is the only way that intergenerational trauma will be halted and it is why the first two editions of Jilya has focused on this very important issue.

The concept of intergenerational transmission of trauma is not new to our field. We have known for a long time that any highly traumatised population (such as war veterans) tend to also struggle to attach to their own children and these children 'inherit' these impacts via disrupted attachment of their own and into their own intimate relationships and with their children. The difference is that the science of what is able to heal attachment has yet to be applied in the Aboriginal context and until this is done foster care is becoming the new stolen generations. IPS will begin the journey to developing empirical models of attachment intervention for Aboriginal children in the coming year. We will update you on our progress!

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