UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

BUT GENDER IS A WHITE THING: GENDER AND AMERICAN INDIAN SWEAT LODGE CEREMONIES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2015

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BUT GENDER IS A WHITE THING: GENDER AND AMERICAN INDIAN SWEAT LODGE CEREMONIES

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Acknowledgments

As no one completes a dissertation or a doctoral program alone, I have many people to thank and would like to take this opportunity to do so.

First, I would like to thank the participants in this study. While I cannot thank you by name, you know who you are. Thank you for giving so freely of yourselves. Sharing such intimate and private experiences is a rare, powerful, and difficult thing (as most rare and powerful things are) and you each did it with such beautiful rawness. I could not have asked for a more impactful group of participants. For this I am eternally in debt to each of you.

To my amazing dissertation chair, Rockey Robbins, I cannot begin to express my gratitude for all your encouragement, support, and dedication to my education and, more importantly, my growth as a professional and human being. Your wisdom and skill set are invaluable. Your passion and willingness to fight for the minority (in all forms) is inspiring. I cannot imagine this experience writing my dissertation and completing my Ph.D., without you. I will forever consider you family.

To my parents, Jerry and Ava Jennings, you embody the meaning of unconditional love. You taught me how to be both strong and bold while also being caring and compassionate. Your unwavering support was the cornerstone of my success. Thank you for teaching me how to chase a dream and for being patient in the chase. I love you both with all my heart and, I promise, grandchildren are on the way.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my love and my favorite outcome of graduate school, Deborah Dorton. Thank you for showing me care when I was stressed and pushing me (even when I didn't want you to) when I lacked

motivation. You have taught me what love and dedication really looks like. Thanks for sharing life with me. I cannot imagine being on this journey with anyone else. Thank you for loving me through this.

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Abstract

Little exists in the field of psychology regarding American Indian sweat purification ceremonies, and even less exists in psychological literature on the impact of gender on such ceremonies or gender from this cultural perspective as a whole. Using generic qualitative analysis this study explored the experiences of individuals who participate in American Indian sweat purification ceremonies, with specific interest in how gender impacts the experience and how the experience impacts overall well-being. The study found one primary theme (Inter-connectedness) and four sub-themes (Genderlessness, Psychological Healing, Physical Healing, and Escape) using a focus group format to interview American Indians who participated in sweat purification ceremonies.

Chapter 1: Introduction

American Indian cultural and spiritual ceremonies have been studied from archeological and historical perspectives but little exists in psychological fields regarding the psychological impact of American Indian spirituality. Spirituality, primarily Judeo-Christian, has however been a fairly widely studied topic and has been linked to positive psychological well-being (Simpson, Cloud, Newman, & Fuqua, 2008). While the body of multicultural literature in psychology has increased, especially in the last 10 years, American Indian culture and spirituality in psychological literature is still vastly under researched.

Colonization of American Indians, in the grand scheme of history, began quite recently. The fall-out of colonization from a research perspective has caused distrust of White imperialism among American Indian communities (Heinrich, Corbin and Thomas, 1990). Colonization has negatively impacted American Indians in innumerable and varied ways. Most pertinent to this paper is its impact on American Indian gender relations, and the meaning of traditional rituals (Grande, 2004). In this study, researchers focused on a purifications ritual (sweat lodge) that American Indian participants engaged in regularly. While the initial focus was on American gender relations in their association with the sweat lodge, it was quickly discerned from interviews, that a myriad of other issues could not be ignored. In particular, the impact of historical trauma and cultural identity became vital elements to be studied, even foregrounded in this study as well as the different experiences between American Indian women and men in the sweat lodge. This study aims to explore, understand and describe the experiences of American Indian men and women who participate in sweat

purification ceremonies. Specifically, the researchers were interested in participants' overall experience, how they felt their gender impacted their experience, how their experience in sweat purification ceremonies compared with other forms of spirituality they had engaged in, and how participation in sweat purification ceremonies impacted their overall well-being.

Sweat Purification Ceremony

The research conducted in this study revolved around participants' experiences in sweat lodge ceremonies, so it is important to begin by offering a brief description of the ceremony and then describing the gap in the psychological literature that exists concerning the ceremonies' impact on participants. Because a more elaborate description will appear in the main body of the literature review let it suffice to offer a brief description here. A sweat lodge ceremony consists, in general, of persons gathering in a room or lodged filled with vaporous stem emitted from a centrally located stack of heated rocks which has water splashed upon them (Bruchac, 1993). A more detailed description of the type of sweat ceremony the participants of this study experienced will be offered later.

In the physical and social sciences there is a developing body of research on the use of steam bath and sauna bathing (including Non-American Indian sweats) and the risks and benefits of participating in such activities (Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, & Cashel 2005). Overall, positive physiological and psychological effects have been associated with sauna bathing and few risks have been noted (Hannuksela & Ellahham, 2001; Kukkonen-Harjula and Kauppinen, 2006; Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, & Cashel 2005; Frankova & Franek, 1990; Gutierrez, Vazquez, & Boakes,

2002; Colmant & Merta, 2000). However, American Indian sweat lodge ceremonies have been relatively under researched in comparison with sauna bathing and significant differences of interactions occur which must be taken into account. Research regarding the overall experience of participants in a sweat purification ceremony is almost non-existent. This is likely due, in large part, to the ceremonial nature of sweat purification ceremonies, the inability to control aspects of a sweat purification ceremony such as temperature and time spent engaging in the sweat, and the overall lack of research with American Indians in general. Measuring an American Indian cultural and spiritual ceremony also presents special issues due to historical factors. Because American Indian culture has historically and presently been misinterpreted, exploited and specific assimilation attempts have been made to alter American Indian traditions, values, beliefs and practices, there is distrust of the academic community and researchers interested in this area of study (Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, & Cashel 2005). This is especially true for sacred ceremonies such as sweat purification ceremonies.

Gender Issues and American Indians

In the introduction, a brief statement about the unique perspectives American Indians tend to have about gender and feminism in general is warranted. There is little written, about feminism and sexism in regard to American Indians in the field of psychology, especially from American Indian perspectives. Yet if one wishes to consider culture as a variable in studies with American Indians, to leave out gender is to fail to consider the truth as a balanced whole (Grande, 2004; Allen, 1992). Nonetheless, as we will consider later, to seriously consider gender issues in American Indian culture

is to understand that for American Indian women "feminism" has been "(correctly) perceived as white-dominated" (Allen, 1992, p. 224).

Research regarding gender differences, especially the experiences of women, in American Indian spirituality is limited in the field of psychology. While some women have experienced Western forms of spirituality as patriarchal and oppressive (Colmant & Merta, 2000), the experience of men and women who participate in Non-Western forms of spirituality, specifically American Indian cultural and spiritual ceremonies, is unknown in the psychological research community.

Counseling and American Indian Well-Being. For American Indians, over-all sense of well-being is linked, not only to culture and spirituality as a whole, but also to traditional ceremonies and rituals (King & Trimble, 2013). Counseling as a field has historically attempted to adapt Western philosophies on healing and well-being to American Indian clients, but some have argued that traditional ways of healing should be incorporated into counseling of American Indian clients (M. Garrett, Garrett, & Brotherton, 2001; Lewis, Duran, & Woodis, 1999; Thompson, 1991). There are several ways to incorporate American Indian culture and spirituality into counseling that will be discussed later, but counselors who have incorporated American Indian cultural activities into their counseling have had moderate success (BigFoot, 2011; J. Garrett & Garrett, 1998; Colmant & Merta 2000; Simms 1999).

Because this study involves the intersection of gender and culture for American Indians, it is also important to consider American Indian identity. American Indian identity cannot be discussed without also discussing historical trauma. The impact of historical trauma on American Indians is immeasurable and includes symptoms such as

guilt, anger, depression and self-destructive behaviors, to name a few (Braveheart, 2004). American Indian identity development is also associated with culture and spirituality (Markstrom, 2011). According to Markstorm (2011) rituals, much like the sweat purification ceremony, impress a culturally valued identity upon the person participating in the ritual, addressing trauma and identity issues.

Current Study. The researchers chose to study one specific American Indian tradition (sweat purification ceremony), rather than American Indian spirituality and gender as a whole, for a number of reasons. First, the researchers participated in such ceremonies and understand them from a direct perspective, in qualitative research this is referred to as a heuristic perspective. This makes conducting this qualitative study much easier because the researchers are familiar with the tradition being referenced (Moustakas, 1990). It is important to acknowledge that there are different American Indian sweat purification ceremonies. For instance, different languages are used in the ceremonies from tribe to tribe. Second, it is likely easier for the researchers to isolate one traditional ceremony and examine it from multiple viewpoints rather than attempting to examine spirituality as a whole from multiple viewpoints. Utilizing the sweat purification ceremony as a focal point will help organize the study and provide a specific context for the study. Third, "sweating" has been utilized in the treatment of some psychological disorders (Colmant & Merta, 2000). For example there are multiple tribal programs that use the sweat lodge ceremony in their treatment of alcohol abuse (Indian Health Services, 2015). This study could provide further practical information to be applied to treatment of individuals with psychological disorders.

The current study investigates the difference between the experiences of American Indian men and women who participate in sweat purification ceremonies through a qualitative methodological approach. The researchers explore how gender impacts the experience of individuals who participate in sweat purification ceremonies and how these ceremonies impact all of the participants' well-being. This study contributes to multicultural and spiritual psychology, provides an in-depth understanding of how gender impacts the participants of American Indian sweat purification ceremonies and explores how American Indian sweat purification ceremonies impact the overall well-being of the participants. The information gained through this study could assist mental health professionals to better understand the intricacies of this American Indian tradition, the way gender and culture combine to impact their American Indian clients, and how a feminist view of cultural traditions can be interpreted in American Indian research. This information could help in work with counseling individual clients and families.

The following review of the literature will examine gender, spirituality, and well-being in American Indian culture. It will review the specific context (sweat purification ceremony) with which to study these topics as well as how these topics can be applicable in clinical contexts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

General History of Sweating Practices

While it is important to note the focus of this paper is on American Indian sweat purification ceremonies, it may be helpful to review the history of sweating and sweat bath rituals in other areas of the world. This provides a basis for similarities between American Indian sweat purification ceremonies and other forms of sweating or steam bath rituals. Research on sweating as a cultural, spiritual and especially physiological practice has been rarely conducted with American Indian sweat purification ceremonies but rather has focused more on present-day saunas, which are not exactly the same but are peripherally related (Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, & Cashel 2005).

The use of sweating or steam bathing has a history in many European countries. As early as 425 B.C. Herodotus wrote of sweat bath customs of the Scythians, who lived in part of what is present-day Russia (Bruchac, 1993). The sweat lodge was described as large pieces of wood covered in woolen cloths where hot stones were placed in the center and Herodotus describes the use of certain fruits being placed on the stones so the Scythians could inhale the fumes (Bruchac, 1993). This practice seems similar to the American Indian practice of placing cedar or sweetgrass on stones to create a vapor. Homer also wrote about ancient Greeks using a "hot air bath" called *laconia* which was copied by the Romans and later became the Roman *balneum* and both were forms of social steam bathing (Bruchac, 1993).

After the fall of the Roman Empire, steam baths were used by the prophet Muhammad around 600 A.D and were called *hammams*, meaning "spreader of warmth"

in Arabic (Bruchac, 1993). The *hammams* paved the way for the Turkish baths, which can still be found in Istanbul and in some U.S. cities (Bruchac, 1993).

Steam bath houses were also used in northern Russia and served not only the purpose of cleaning the body, but also ritualistic purposes, esoteric rites, therapeutic treatment, and social purposes (Bruchac, 1993). The Russian word for "to take a bath" is *paritsia* and literally translates to mean "to steam oneself" and these Russian steam baths are similar to, and likely influenced, the saunas of Finland, Scandinavia, Latvia, and Estonia (Bruchac, 1993).

American Indian sweat baths and sweat purification ceremonies have been a part of American Indian life for centuries but have only been documented since the first Spanish missionaries traveled to present-day Mexico (Bruchac, 1993). Aztecs and Mayans both used forms of sweat baths and these sweat baths were used as a remedy for almost every illness and were a focus of everyday health and wellness (Bruchac, 1993). Although sweat baths were effective in treating many of the indigenous illnesses, smallpox and measles brought to North America by Europeans were more easily spread by sweat baths (Bruchac, 1993).

There are two types of sweat baths or sweat lodges commonly used in North America at the time the first Europeans arrived, and that continue in present-day. The first, which we will refer to as the heated-stone sweat, involves the heating of stones in a fire outside the sweat lodge and then carrying the heated stones into the lodge. Water is then poured on the rocks in order to create steam (Bruchac, 1993). The second is the direct-fire sweat, most commonly found in parts of the Arctic among some of the Inuit, and in parts of California. The direct-fire sweat is typically in a permanent structure

and is used to create dry heat, which causes the lodge or house to sweat. The lodge used in a direct-fire sweat is often also used as a full-time home for individuals or used regularly in ceremonies and gatherings (Bruchac, 1993). A more thorough description of sweat purification ceremonies specific to this study will be reviewed later.

While the dwelling and procedures differ across cultures two main elements of sweating practices are stable: water and heat. These elements combine to create a physically similar environment (Bruchac, 1993). While different forms of sweating focus on different elements of the practice most sweating practices incorporate physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being (Bruchac, 1993). The following will briefly review the physiological, psychological, and spiritual effects of sweating practices.

Physiological effects. As stated previously little research has been conducted specifically on the physiological effects of American Indian sweat lodge ceremonies. However, there is evidence of physiological effects with the use of saunas or Finnish baths. In a 2001 meta-analysis, Hannuksela and Ellahham examined the physiological effects of sauna bathing, which were later updated in 2006 by Kukkonen-Harjula and Kauppinen. They found sweating provides physiological health benefits and few risks. Some of the physiological effects include increases in sweating, blood flow, heart rate, and systolic blood pressure. Sweating practices have also been shown to activate the sympathetic nervous system and the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal hormonal axis (Hannuksela & Ellahham, 2001). While people with cardiovascular disorders have sometimes been warned not to utilize saunas, most evidence does not support this concern for individuals stabilized on medication and individuals with hypertension tolerate sauna bathing well (Hannuksela & Ellahham, 2001).

Some evidence has supported the use of sauna bathing for individuals with Rheumatic diseases and musculoskeletal disorders (Hannuksele & Ellahham, 2001, & Kukkonen-Harjula & Kauppinen, 2006.) Sauna bathing promotes deeper sleep, muscle relaxation, and has been shown to be a positive adjunct to cancer treatments (Berger & Rounds, 1998, Hannuksela & Ellahham 2001, Kukkonen-Harjula & Kauppinen). Overall, for healthy people and those with medical conditions that are stabilized, sauna bathing is well tolerated and may promote physiological wellness.

Psychological effects. There is limited research on the psychological effects of sweating. However, what research exists suggests that psychological effects are positive. Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, and Cashel (2005) found sweating promotes positive effects on sleep, mood, affect and reduced hyperactivity. Another study found that sweating improved mental satisfaction, energy, and relaxation, and led to reductions in frustration and anxiety (Frankova & Franek, 1990). Positive mood and relief of stress through relaxation has been shown to be a common result of sweating (Gutierrez, Vazquez, & Boakes, 2002; Colmant & Merta, 2000).

Limited research has been conducted among clinical populations. In a study on patients in an inpatient treatment setting, Masuda, Nakazato, Kihara, Minagoe, & Tei (2005) found thermal therapy to be useful for mildly depressed patients with appetite loss and subjective complaints. Research conducted by Gutierrez, Vazquez, and Boakes (2002) explored the effects of sweating for individuals diagnosed with anorexia. They found positive effects on levels of depression, stress, and reducing hyperactivity.

Spiritual effects. While the positive physiological and psychological effects of sweating practices seem to be examined fairly easily through typical research efforts,

the spiritual effects offer some difficulty for current research procedures. Sweating practices with the longest history have used sweating not only as a physical cleansing and to promote psychological well-being, but also as a form of spiritual expression (Aaland, 1978). Specifically, for Finnish individuals, sauna bathing is a time for relaxing and interacting with others (Aaland, 1997; Konya & Berger, 1973; Leimu, 2002). Spirituality and interaction with others appears to be a collaborative theme in sweat practices. The Finnish sauna was important for individuals to move into the sacred (Leimu, 2002) and negative emotions such as anger were thought to die in the sauna (Law, 1978).

Some research in the spiritual area has been conducted with American Indians. Among people who participate in American Indian sweat purification ceremonies, spirituality and interpersonal closeness are common themes reported (Walkingstick-Garrett & Osborne, 1995). Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, and Cashel (2005) state the main purpose for sauna use is close interpersonal interaction. Specific to American Indian sweat purification ceremonies, Waegemakers-Schiff and Moore (2006) found that participants are more similar in spiritual and emotional dimensions after the ceremony than before. The participants in this study scored more similarly on the Heroic Myth Index, a measure of spiritual and emotional dimensions, after the sweat purification ceremony than before (Waegemakers-Schiff & Moore, 2006). This lends evidence to the combined effects of interpersonal interaction and spiritual components of participating in sweat practices.

Researchers have conceptualized that some spiritual aspects of sweating are achieved through altered states of consciousness (Eason, 2004; Colmant, Eason,

Winterowd, Jacobs, & Cashel 2005). Colmant Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, and Cashel (2005) elaborate that conceptualizing the sweating experience as an altered stated of consciousness can create difficulties in terms of measuring the effects of sweating. This is especially a problem for attempts to measure the spiritual effects of sweating. Altered states by nature are difficult to assess after they occur. Collecting data, beyond observation, during a sweat purification ceremony is complicated for a number of reasons. First, respect for the cultural and spiritual importance of such ceremonies prevents methods that may interfere with the ceremony itself. Second, altered states achieved in a sweat purification ceremony are achieved through a number of factors and methods for data collection would likely inhibit one or more of these factors (Colmant, Eason, Winterowd, Jacobs, & Cashel 2005). For example, the need to control heat levels for research purposes would likely interfere with the use of heat in the sweat purification ceremony.

American Indian Purification or Sweat Lodge Ceremonies

A brief history of sweating practices was reviewed earlier, but more elaboration is needed especially concerning the type of sweat most commonly used by participants in this study. Again, sweat purification ceremonies differ across American Indian tribes and the researchers cannot possibly explain the intricate details of each specific tribal tradition. The following description focuses on the Lakota sweat tradition. There is a Lakota tribal story told about the sweat lodge that is helpful in understanding the components we will discuss later. It is called the story of *Inyan Hoksi* or Stone Boy.

> A girl had five brothers. On a typical morning they went out to hunt. They all came to a peculiar creek, noting it seemed mysterious. Each went in a different

direction when they came to the creek. That evening only four came back. They were very sad but because they had to eat, they went out again. Again one did not come back. This happened again and again until the girl had no brothers left. She had no ceremony to help her deal with her loneliness and need to pray. She went to the top of a hill to kill herself. She took a good sized rock and swallowed it, but instead of dying she became pregnant and in four days had a boy she named Inyan Hoksi (Stone Boy). He grew up very fast and began hunting which made his mother sad and she told him that he would go hunting and never come home again, just as his uncles had. He explained that he would retrieve his uncles. The next morning he smelled tobacco smoke and followed it to a witch's lodge. She invited him in and put on some meat to eat and asked him to walk on her aching back while they waited on the meat to cook. He saw four bundles and felt his uncles' spirits telling him that it was their bodies. He saw her spear that she was going to kill him with. He jumped down on her, breaking her back. The uncles' spirits told him to take 16 willow branches, bend them over, and cover them with hides until there was complete darkness in the lodge. He was then to put the bundles in the middle of the lodge with red hot rocks. He was to pour water four times on the rocks and then their spirits would re-enter their bodies. This is the first rite of the Sioux (Lakota) (R. Robbins, personal communication, January 15, 2011).

This story explains the possible origins of the lodge and the sweat purification ceremony itself for Lakotas. Central to the sweat purification ceremony is the idea of "mitakuwe oys'on" which means "all my relations" (Badhand, 2002). Badhand (2002)

explained in order for a Holy person to connect to the spirit world, he or she must make a connection with all his or her relations. It is recognition of being in the wholeness of the sacred, or the common divine reality of every living thing that exists on earth(Badhand, 2002). Simply, it means to put selfishness aside and to connect with everything. For example, when one sings the Four Directions song, a song commonly sung in sweat purification ceremonies, one is to take care not to sing more loudly than others or to sing in a way to bring notice to oneself (Badhand, 2002) . Participation in a group is valued more than expressing one's uniqueness. Certainly uniqueness matters greatly but one is not to behave proudly or set themselves higher than others (Badhand, 2002). Howard Badhand explains *Mitakuwe oyas'in* in more detail:

> *Mitakuwe oyas'in* means my blood relations inclusive of all, or we are all related. This word is spoken before and after many ceremonies. Everything is sacred and connected to everything else. We try to understand this with our heart rather than our minds. The earth, sun, wind, rain, stones, insects, winged, the four-legged, the fish are all connected. We talk about them as if they are our brothers and sisters. They give themselves so we can live. Our belief is that the Great Spirit splits itself into everything. The spirit is in everything and we try to understand this multiplicity but also in unity. We have names for spirits in things and beings. A stone has Wankan spirit but is really God too, just like we are. Mitakuwe oyas'in, all my relations (Badhand, 2002, p. 25).

All of the participants in the following study understood the idea of Mitakuwe oyas'in, though over half of them used the word in their own language that meant "all my relations."

God. For the Lakota, The great spirit is called, *Wakan*. *Wa* means action taken into something. *Kan* means vein through which blood flows. Together *Wakan* means sacred. *Tanka* means large or great. *Wakan Tanka* literally means, "action into the pathway of life in its grandest" (Badhand, 2002). This may mean each of us expresses the creator through our lives. As we can see *Wakan Tanka* is the entity, which exists in *Mitakuwe oyas'in*. In a westernized form this would be like saying "god" is in all of us or we are all "god." The participants in the research group translated their word of God in the following phrases: "the governor of all," "one", the "creator" and the "energy in all things."

Inipi. *Inipi,* the word used for sweat does not translate into "sweat" but rather "purification" (Badhand, 2002, p. 34). In a sweat ceremony, one is not relieving ones self of guilt through purification but is becoming pure by becoming one with everything. This has to do with getting into "no time and no space", getting free from the mind and time (Badhand, 2002, p. 34). In the lodge, Badhand (2002) explains, "we are closest to the source because we are in the present", which is immediate experience (p. 34). For example when one is in the eternal now they experience the unity of all things rather than being angry about an insult or worrying about what is coming up tomorrow. Purification is freeing one's self from the constructed self. It is freeing one's self from attachments and distractions (Badhand, 2002). The participants in this research study concurred with this view of the inipi.

There are four parts to a sweat lodge and sweat lodge ceremony: The poles, the covering, the stones, and the pipe. Keep in mind the parts may differ in use or importance by tribe. Because the Lakota sweat lodge, called an *inipi* is the most

familiar form of sweat lodge today we will describe it in more detail (Bruchac, 1993). The following information was derived from the writers' own experiences with sweat ceremonies and supplemented by information gathered from Bruchac (1993).

The Poles. Each part of the preparation of the sweat lodge has special meaning and ritual. The poles that begin to make up the sweat lodge are typically made of wood or tree branches. For example, the Lakota *inipi* is traditionally made from willow saplings and the Lakota place tobacco where the willows are cut to show thanks for the trees' sacrifice (Bruchac, 1993). Willow saplings are often chosen because they are frequently found near water and water and steam are such an integral part of the cleansing process in a sweat. Willows have also been known among differing American Indian cultures as having healing qualities, which is also part of the sweat lodge ceremony (Bruchac, 1993). When the poles are bent and tied together at the top they create sides which represent the four directions.

When the frame of the sweat lodge is complete it looks similar to a dome facing towards the earth. The poles are symbolic in several different ways. They symbolize the sky and some American Indian cultures view the dome as different animals (Bruchac, 1993). Some tribes see each pole as a different direction with various spiritual associations.

The Covering. When the poles that complete the structure of the sweat lodge are in place, a covering is stretched over the outside of the poles. For the Lakota, the traditional covering of the *inipi* was buffalo hides or other animal skins (Bruchac, 1993). Today, many sweat lodges are covered with canvas.

The covering is symbolic in different ways much like the structure created by the poles. The covering is symbolic of the night sky above ones head when he or she is in the lodge. Because traditionally the covering was animal skin it can also be symbolic of being in the body of the animal (Bruchac, 1993). Some view the covered lodge as a womb that one can be born out of after one is cleansed (Bruchac, 1993).

The Stones. The stones described earlier in the heated-stone sweat, are heated on a fire outside the lodge and then brought into the center of the lodge and placed in a dug out pit. The stones are often referred to as the elders due to their long existence on the earth. They are referred to in Lakota as tunka, and the word tunka-shila translates to mean "grandfather" (Bruchac, 1993, p. 36). Participants in sweat ceremonies will often refer to the stones being brought in as bringing in the "grandfathers." Many American Indian cultures recognize the stones as alive and respect that the stones have been on the earth before people. In Lakota tradition it is said that "life began with the rising of a great stone from the waters of creation" (Bruchac, 1993, p. 36).

The best stones for sweats are Lava rock because they withstand the heating process and do not crumble as easily (Bruchac, 1993). Round stones approximately the size of a man's head are preferred and stones containing quartz, stones from river beds, and white granite stones are never to be used in a sweat lodge because they may explode when heated and water is poured on them (Bruchac, 1993). When the stones are heated they are typically brought into the sweat lodge a few at a time between each round of a sweat. The person carrying the stones is viewed to have a very special job and the position is held with pride. When the stones are brought into the sweat lodge

sweetgrass or some other grass is often placed on the rocks to create a vapor and water is poured on the rocks to create steam.

The Pipe. Of the four parts listed the pipe is probably the part that is not used as commonly. Some sweat lodges do not utilize a pipe in their sweat purification ceremonies at all. In traditional Lakota sweats, the pipe is used every time the door or flap of the lodge is opened and is kept outside on an altar when the door is closed. It is important to reiterate that the pipe is used differently in different American Indian cultures and has different meaning for each. For the Lakota, the sacred pipe is used to send prayers up to the Creator with the smoke. Howard Badhand (2002) claims that the pipe came to the Lakota when the desire for power and glory had gained prominence in spiritual considerations. The spirit of the pipe was a gift to the Lakota to help them look at a more feasible way of acting in the world (Badhand, 2002). War was occurring in the world at the time and it was a challenge for the Lakota to return to a life of harmony and balance in the spirit and material world (Badhand, 2002).

There is also a story about the sacred pipe that is as follows:

> Two warriors had been out for days looking for game to bring back food to the people of the village. They saw a buffalo in the distance coming toward them. But as it came closer, they saw a beautiful young woman dressed in white buckskin. The older warrior looked across the lonely plain and wanted to take the beautiful woman. The younger one told him to leave her alone. He saw her as *Wakan* (great spirit). As the older warrior went to take the woman, dust and smoke began to whirl around him and when it cleared he was nothing but a pile of flesh and bones being eaten by a snake. The younger warrior humbled

himself. The buffalo woman told him to go back to his village and prepare a village lodge where she could bring the people a gift of peace and harmony. Much time transpired before the White Buffalo woman came to the village. Howard Badhand says that much preparation had to be made for the Pipe. The Lakota was a warrior culture and the arrival of the Pipe would mark a new beginning of spiritual refinement and understanding. The people had to prepare themselves for this new spiritual connection by humbling themselves and creating calmness. Without calmness or centeredness one cannot begin the movement toward peace. After the preparation the White Buffalo woman brought the pipe to the people (R. Robbins, personal communication, January 15, 2011).

Song and Prayer. Typically there are four rounds during a sweat ceremony. Participants can leave the sweat ceremony at any time. But after each round many pourers of the water offer participants a chance to leave the sweat if they wish. In many lodges, participants enter and leave the lodge, saying, "mitakuwe oyas'in, all my relations." Often women sit on one side and men on the other. Men are more likely to lead sweats, or pour the water on the rocks, though this is not the case in all lodges (Badhand, 2002).

Singing American Indian songs and prayers during the ceremony is highly valued. Often the Four Directions song is sung first (Badhand, 2002). The songs are about God and the participants' relationship to God. The first round often involves singing the spirits into the lodge. The second is a prayer round, when all pray for, not themselves, but for others and four leggeds (animals) and nature in general (Badhand,

2002). The third round is typically a prayer for healing (Badhand, 2002). Sometimes a rock is passed around. The fourth round is to sing the spirits back (Badhand, 2002). Prayers are often deeply felt and many tears are shed. The songs also are sung with much emotion (Badhand, 2002).

Historical Trauma and American Indian Identity

There are over 500 American Indian Tribes recognized by the federal government (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2015). There are different cultural ways in every tribe that must be recognized. Still, most tribes share a legacy of European-American colonization and many American Indians report symptoms associated with historic trauma. Brave Heart defined historical trauma as "cumulative psychological and emotional wounding across generations, including one's own life span, and comes from massive group traumatic events and experiences (2005, p. 1).

For over five hundred years American Indians have endured trauma associated with disease, war, colonization, cultural genocide, poverty, dislocation and racism (Whiteback, 2004). Diseases such as, small pox and measles, alone reduced the population of American Indians by over ninety percent within the first 200 years of European colonialization (Whiteback, 2004). Many were enslaved, often taken to Caribbean islands where they could not escape back to their tribal people (Whiteback, 2004). Governments forcefully took American Indian land and American Indians were imprisoned onto reservations and small lots (Whiteback, 2004). Farmlands and hunting grounds were off limits and traditional food was replaced with commodities handed out by unscrupulous charity organizations (Whiteback, 2004). Traditional religious

practices, such as peyote meetings and Sun Dances were banned until the passage of the 1978 Religious Freedom Act (Archuleta, Lomawaima, & Child 2000).

The United States government began providing funds to support private and religious agencies operating Indian boarding schools, whose express purpose was to assimilate American Indian children to Western culture (Stannard, 1992). The number of children from who began American Indian boarding schools rose to about fifty percent between the 1800's and 1930s (Stannard,1992). Stannard (1992) describes children being dragged from their homes, transported long distances, and placed into harsh, strict schooling conditions. He goes on to describe that they were not allowed to speak their tribal languages, had their hair sheered, forbidden to practice their religious rites and tribal/cultural ways and abused emotionally and with harsh physical punishments. Their traditional American Indian ways were replaced by strict schedules, interactions that reflected a capitalist wage-based economy and Western formal relating. Students were taught that American Indian ways of life were savage and inferior (Stannard, 1992).

By the 1950's the boarding school era diminished, today only about 10% of American Indian students attend (Stannard, 1992). However efforts to assimilate American Indians was far from over and assimilation meant continued destruction of the American Indian family. By the end of the 20th century between 25% to 35% of American Indian children had been taken from their American Indian homes with the help of social workers and psychologists using assessment instruments that were inappropriate for their culture (Pace, Robbins, Choney, Hill, Lacey, &Blair, 2006; Stannard, 1992).

Psychological Impact of Historical Trauma. The psychological impacts of historical trauma have manifested themselves in symptoms such as guilt, anger, depression, self- destructive behaviors and a number of disorders for American Indians (Braveheart, 2005, p, 1). While historical trauma has caused great needs for American Indians, mental health has been cited as "the largest unmet health need for Indian people today" (Faireloth, 2011 p. 5).

The extant literature on the relationship between comorbid alcohol/drug abuse and psychiatric disorders in the adult American Indian population is significantly higher than in non-Native populations (Abbott, 2008). Major depression has consistently been found in research to be a problem many American Indian adults experience (Grandbois & Schadt, 1994; LaDue, 1994; Young, 1991) Prevalence of PTSD among adult American Indians has been shown to be two to three times the national rate (Beals et al., 2005). Death related to alcohol abuse and misuse is seven times the national rate (Sarche & Spicer, 2008). Studies have found that there is a pattern of depression as a comorbid disorder among those with alcohol/drug abuse disorders (Beals, Novins, Whitesell, Spicer, & Mitchell 2005). The Psychological impact of historical trauma is evident.

Despite the systematic abuses, destruction, and oppression suffered by American Indians, and the psychological impact of historical trauama, they survived. American Indians have demonstrated great resilience, adaptability and even hope and healing (Bigfoot & Schmidt, 2006). Countless languages have been revived and elders have remembered the songs for sweat ceremonies and sun dances when it was thought that

they had been forgotten (Bigfoot & Schmidt, 2006). American Indian culture, while experiencing great trials, has also been revived in important and meaningful ways.

American Indian Identity. Before directly discussing American Indian identity it is imperative to discuss the term "American Indian." It is impossible to discuss American Indian identity without alluding to the values and belief systems of American Indians. Since colonization, Euro-American colonists have tried to define what it means to be an American Indian for themselves and for American Indians (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). Congress established the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other special offices to manage relations with American Indians and to define political and legal statutes (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). In the nineteenth century the government began maintaining records of blood quantum ancestries of the American Indian population and they used the term "full blood" to describe persons who had no biological ties to other races (Getches, Wilkinson, & Williams, 2004). They determined that if a person was less than one quarter American Indian ancestry, he or she was not American Indian. This identification of American Indians by Whites, working in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, occurred at the same time efforts were being made to assimilate and "civilize" American Indians through the forced boarding school educations discussed above (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004).

In the 1960's assimilation practices were replaced with policies of self-determination (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). Tribes were allowed to decide for themselves who was allowed to have American Indian identities through tribal memberships, which varied from tribe to tribe. Many set a quarter blood quantum

as the standard for tribal identity but others, such as the Cherokee, had no blood quantum minimum (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). They simply required membership applicants to demonstrate that they had an ancestor on the Dawes role (American Indians had the opportunity to sign Indian registration forms from 1894 to 1906). Restrictions related to claiming American Indian ancestry on the Dawes roles, caused further problems related to both the validity of the claims as well as the failure of some American Indians to enroll (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). The incentive for non-American Indians to register was the possibility of obtaining 160 acres of land in Oklahoma (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). The federal government wanted to assimilate American Indians by giving each family a farm situated in a checker board grid (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). American Indian families were given farms surrounded by White owned farms in checkerboard fashion to keep them separate, which made interaction with other American Indians more difficult, thus stifling traditional ways. The notion of private property was noxious to many American Indians. For instance, some Cherokees moved to southern Texas and Mexico to attempt to continue their traditional ways and values (Getches, Wilkinson, & Williams, 2004). The blood quantum emphasis has had tremendous effect on American Indians. For instance, it has an alienating effect on those with and those without sufficient blood degree (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). It impacts relations between a parent, who is certified as American Indian and children who may not be (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004). It also impacts relational choices because of identity, economic and prestige reasons. It

continues to be a profound psychological issue for individual American Indians wrestling with identity issues (Getches, Wilkinson, Williams, & Fletcher 2004).

Since the seventies, it has been increasingly popular to identify as American Indian (Markstrom, 2011). This may stem from a variety of reasons. In many places identifying as American Indian is less of a stigma than it once was. Consequently, more American Indians may feel confident in identifying as such on the National census (Markstrom, 2011). Many identify as American Indian accepting, uncritically, romantic family myths about an American Indian ancestor who married into their family and many of these people have no regular interactions with any American Indian community (Markstrom, 2011). Markstrom (2011) states that some American Indians resent these self-identified, so called American Indians, who typically do not have religious and ceremonial grounds, don't speak a tribal language, and who either do not know or do not have American Indian family knowledge for a variety of reasons. He reports they are known to sometimes make comments on behalf of American Indians that do not represent genuine American Indian experiences. Further, their identification on the National census distorts statistics about household income, poverty rates, and other measures of well-being, and because many governmental programs require only self-identification, often limited educational aid may not be extended to many culturally engaged American Indians (Markstrom, 2011). Consequently, culturally involved American Indians often have antagonism against those who are not involved culturally but still check the box as American Indian (Markstrom, 2011).

American Indian identity is also associated with culture and spirituality (language, history/stories, worldview/values, and beliefs/practices) (Markstrom, 2011).

Culturally involved, American Indians are distinctive in regard to their substantive ethnic identities. Markstrom (2011) argues that rituals impress a culturally valued identity upon the initiate, not only on American Indians but all initiates in many ethnic groups. Scratching ceremonies among the Muskogee Creeks, coming of age ceremonies for Navajo girls, humblechas or vision quests for Lakotas, sweat purification ceremonies for many tribes, to name only a few, all influence ethnic identity formation and pride in one' s tribal culture (Markstrom, 2011) . LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, and Whitbeck (2006) measured enculturation and participation in traditional activities and found them to be associated with prosocial outcomes and lower rates of drug and alcohol use. They argued that the correlation was directly related to the participants' participation in American Indian cultural activities.

We cannot discuss American Indian identity without discussing language. The regular use of one's tribal language has been associated with psychological well-being but also with experiencing prejudice and discrimination (Snipp, 1989). Many American Indian languages have become extinct, but many survive and are spoken frequently in homes (Snipp, 1989). Snipp (1989) writes that rural American Indians are more likely than urban American Indians to speak their tribal language. He also found that those who speak their tribal language are more likely to be involved in sweat purification and peyote rituals.

Finally, we must also consider that part of American Indian identity may be a response to and resistance from dominant culture and dominant culture's attempts at assimilation. Snipp (1989) discusses at length, how many American Indians' identity is formed in reaction to assimilation practices such as attempts to discount value

differences that exist between American Indians and dominant couture. It has been the resistance to dominant culture's attempts to invalidate American Indian life style choices (such as speaking tribal languages) and the "enormous efforts made to Christianize them" that has significantly impacted some American Indian identities (Snipp, 1989, p. 176). He contends that a thorough understanding of American Indian identities must take these assimilation practices into account.

Gender and Western Spirituality

Gender differences in spirituality or religion have been popular topics among religious researchers and religious educators. However, much of the research conducted has been primarily on a Judeo-Christian population and thus provides knowledge about this specific religious and spiritual belief system (Close, 2001). Religion and spirituality has been popularly categorized into Western, generally Judeo-Christian and Catholicism, and Non-Western, which is typically thought of as Eastern or Asian religions. However, the Non-Western category seems, to encompass anything other than Judeo-Christian belief systems rather than spirituality by location (Western, Non-Western).

Findings regarding gender differences in western forms of spirituality are mixed in both outcome and theory. Research has suggested that women are more religious than men (Mahalik & Lagan, 2001; Ozorak, 1996; Thompson, 1991). Hall (1997) and Stokes (1990) claimed these differences were due to gender socialization. Specifically, Stokes (1990) found that there are no major differences between men and women in terms of content of faith development, but that men and women experience faith differently. He theorized that, due to socialization, women have a "greater emotional

involvement in their faith development and explore more fully the meaning of the faith experience" (Stokes, 1990, p. 175). He found that women are more likely than men to turn to others in times of life crisis and women are more likely to define "faith" as "a relationship with God" while men are more likely to define it as " a set of beliefs." He reports this as an affirmation of traditional masculine and feminine social roles.

Thompson (1991) theorized that gender differences were better accounted for by gender orientation, whether one identifies as masculine or feminine, rather than sex. He stated it seemed femininity would be most related to religion. In his study he found that when gender orientation was accounted for, femininity in men and women was most related to religiousness.

Despite the amount of research on gender differences as related to spirituality and religion, one study provided evidence to the contrary. Simpson, Cloud, Newman, and Fuqua (2008) found no differences between genders in overt religious behavior such as attending public religious activities, or private religious activity such as prayer or meditation, between genders. They also found no differences on levels of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny on religious participation.

American Indian Women and Spirituality. The ceremony discussed in this study, the sweat purification ceremony, while being traditionally used in North America, does not come out of a Judeo-Christian perspective, and thus is categorized as Non-Western in terms of spirituality.

The research conducted on Westernized forms of spirituality, while helpful in understanding possible gender differences for that population and possibly some ways socialization may impact spiritual expression, cannot be extrapolated to Non-Western

forms of spirituality due to a difference in spiritual paradigms and belief systems. However, it is important for us to briefly review some research on gender and Western forms of spirituality in order to understand some of the possible similarities and differences between a Judeo-Christian (Westernized) and the Non-Western ceremony discussed in this study. Because this study utilizes a ceremony specific to American Indians it is also important to discuss the spirituality of American Indian women. While little to no research has been conducted specifically on gender differences in spirituality with American Indian populations we do have access to historical and narrative accounts of American Indian women and their spiritual ways of being.

It is often difficult to separate out what is specific to culture and what it is specific to the spirituality of a given culture. This is especially true for American Indians. While our focus in this section will be on American Indian women and spirituality it is important to note that many cultural aspects of American Indians is so intrinsically tied to spirituality that it would do an injustice to try to separate the two. Weahkee (2008) made this point in her chapter of Woman Soul by stating "It is impossible to talk about American Indian women and culture without considering Indian spirituality" (p. 107). Just as this is true for some American Indian women, this idea can also be analogous to the use of sweat purification ceremonies and spirituality. For some American Indians, sweat purification ceremonies are an integral part of spirituality and the use of the lodge cannot be separated from spirituality.

Traditional American Indian women find their identity rooted in spirituality, family and tribal values and see themselves in harmony with the biological, spiritual, and social worlds (Weahkee, 2008). In fact, Champagn (1994) discusses the difficulty

that traditional American Indian's have defining or explaining religion. For most American Indians the idea of religion encompasses current living family, ancestors, and future generations or "seventh generation" as future generations are often refered to in American Indian cultures (Weahkee, 2008, p. 107). With spirituality comes honor and responsibility for current, past and future living entities. Spirituality is found in people, animals, and biological materials. In essence, the Lakota word *mitakuwe oys'on* discussed earlier speaks to this wholeness and relatedness and also to the all-encompassing aspect of spirituality.

Specific to American Indian women, spirituality is often viewed as a private matter and there are many spiritual beliefs and practices that are not shared with outsiders (people outside of the family or tribe). Women often have a special role in American Indian spirituality. Female spiritual figures that are sacred and hold powerful positions are reflected in many American Indian cultures (Weahkee, 2008). While the role of American Indian women differs by tribe, American Indian women's power is "manifested in their roles as sacred life givers, transmitters of cultural knowledge, caregivers of relatives, socializers of children, healers, warriors, and leaders" (Weahkee, 2008, p. 110). Wilma Mankiller (2004) discussed how equality between men and women was historically greater than it has been in recent years. Assimilation, in many ways, impacted the traditional views of power between men and women in American Indian culture; however, American Indian women leaders have traditionally focused on the positive attributes of tribal communities as a method of resisting assimilation. American Indian women have often been the center of American Indian resistance to colonization and have, essentially, been the voice of resilience and strength (Weahkee,

2008). The power that women hold within American Indian cultures frequently is linked to their spirituality. Restoration of harmony and balance for American Indian tribes is, in many ways, a spiritual task and women are central to this task (Mankiller, 2004).

Few psychological research studies have focused specifically on American Indian women, though one of the most important researchers of American Indians, Joseph Trimbell, directly calls for gender considerations in future research (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2008). Gonzalez and Bennett (2000) found that American Indian women reported feeling less valued by mainstream society than their male counterparts. Portman and Garrett (2005) report that samples of presenting problems of American Indian women suggest that gender issues is one of the primary foci. Mangelson-Stander's (2000) argues that gender issues, in her work in personal trauma, echoes this focus. She reports that her work in recovery has shown the value of using spiritual practices. Malone (2000) argues that counselors who work with American Indian women should integrate American Indian feminist theory into their practices.

American Indian Men and Spirituality. Describing the spirituality of American Indian men is, in a lot of ways, describing the general, and often over simplified view of American Indian spirituality. Men are, by and large, the center of spiritual ceremonies and take on leadership roles in spiritual life. However, differing from Western forms of spirituality, American Indian men are not always seen as rigid leaders, as Western cinema may have you believe. Westerners tend to be "blinded by Hollywood images" (Maracle, 1996, p. 67) when it comes to American Indian culture alone, but the aspect of spirituality among American Indians is, often seemingly overtly,

portrayed inaccurately and in a negative light. Though the focus of this paper is on American Indian women, every effort is made to portray American Indian men realistically and fairly. When discussing gender relations in American Indian culture we must consider the influence of colonization. Colonization had just as great an impact on American Indian men as it did on American Indian women in that traditional values were diminished and replaced by Euro-American values (Maracle, 1996). For example, some theorize that the stripping of the valuable roles that had traditionally been assigned to American Indian men by colonization caused American Indian men to adopt traditional Euro-American roles that were male dominate (Maracle, 1996).

Theory

Wellness. For the purposes of this study, researchers desired a framework that was holistic and that at least had some parallels with the American Indian healing discussions above but that also had an empirical research base. The wellness theories appeared to be the best match. In practice, psychological counseling is often viewed as a mechanism for relieving distress. When one is free of distress one is described as "well." Definitions of "wellness" are gradually changing. For example in 1964 the World Health Organization defined optimal health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization (WHO), 1964, p. 1). Granello (2012) uses the term to represent an emerging treatment paradigm for both healthcare generally and the mental health field specifically" (p.8). He states the "wellness paradigm represents a reevaluation of the biomedical model of healthcare and the Western philosophical tradition of Cartesian dualism upon which it is based. The traditional medical model

has a pathogenic reductionist and disease focus, while in contrast the wellness model has a salutogenic (health enhancing) focus that is related to constant striving for optimal functioning" (Granello, 2012, 1995, p. 8). Viewing wellness as more than simply disease free means individuals who are already free of disease can improve in the area of wellness. As Granello (2012) states, "the wellness journey is one that never ends" (p.9). As stated earlier that purification ceremonies were not about relieving guilt or cleansing oneself but rather about connection and oneness within the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. Given this one can understand how sweat purification ceremonies could help improve wellness. Just as wellness is not the absence of disease, purification is not the absence of negative feelings, spiritual experiences, or illnesses. The sweat purification ceremony is one example where all the parts of the self are coming together and this form of wellness includes spirituality as an essential component of personal well-being.

Wellness counselors, according to Granello (2012), believe well-being is interwoven in all dimensions of the human experience and that all the components are interrelated and interdependent. This fits well with the beliefs reviewed earlier regarding the sweat purification ceremony and that all parts of the self (mind, body, spirit) are interrelated with everything including the environment. Wellness counselors also question quality of life versus quantity (Granello, 2012). To be well may not actually mean to live longer, but rather to live more fully.

Spirituality as a component of wellness is not merely viewed as a means to prevent or recover from negative illnesses or feelings but rather a way of improving ones well-being even when one is not suffering from the negative. Prayer is and has

historically been a part of American Indian tradition (Portman & Garrett, 2006). Granello (2012) discusses the aspects of prayer as it relates to wellness, "the connection between healing practices and spirituality across native peoples acknowledges that the gentle guidance provided by the celestial world can be experienced through prayer" (p. 162). Prayer is an important component in many healing rituals including sweat purification ceremonies, vision quests, smudging, pipe ceremonies, and the Sundance (Portman & Garrett, 2006). Within the context of the present study the use of prayer is central to the sweat ceremonies and thus informs our study.

With regard to Counseling Psychology as a field, some have argued that the incorporation of traditional forms of healing for American Indian clients can be helpful (M. Garrett, Garrett, & Brotherton, 2001; Lewis, Duran, & Woodis, 1999; Thompson, 1991). Partnering with traditional healers has been one proposed way of better helping American Indian clients (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2008). In order to partner with an American Indian healer a counselor can "(a) support the viability of traditional healing as an effective treatment, (b) actively refer clients to indigenous healers, or (c) actively work together with indigenous healers" (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2008, p. 103). A number of studies have proposed the use of American Indian beliefs and ceremonies within the conventional counseling setting. Simms (1999) combined the use of traditional counseling techniques with American Indian talking circles and sweat purification ceremonies and found them to be successful. Colmant and Merta (1999) also had success using sweat purification ceremonies as part of treatment with Navajo youth who had behavioral issues.

An American Indian Womanist Perspective: Feminism has had a powerful influence on both general society and the scientific community over the last sixty years, but is has not been fully embraced by various diverse groups of women, especially in the Black and American Indian communities. For American Indians spirituality is often part of the problem when feminists attempt to bridge the divide, as has been alluded to and will be elaborated more in this section. Furthermore, researching the intersection of spirituality, culture and gender seems to complicate this matter further and perhaps this is why little to no research is conducted on this complex intersection.

While organizations, such as the American Psychological Association, have instituted multicultural guidelines in order to create a standard for equal treatment for all persons regardless of race and culture are progressive, but are not enough (Silverstein, 2006). On the other hand, feminist literature seems to neglect intersections between gender and sexuality with culture and race. Silverstein (2006) and Reid (2002) have advocated for a complexity paradigm that would "involve a commitment to examining all of the salient features of personal identity" (Silverstein, p. 26). The idea that all theories of human behavior are culturally specific underlies their argument but creating a complexity paradigm to integrate gender and cultural differences in research and practice is difficult.

Because spirituality is often viewed as synonymous with religion and, for some women, religions have been experienced as patriarchal and have served to oppress women's rights, feminist literature is often void of the positive aspects of women's spirituality (Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leahers, 2008). The intersection between feminism and spirituality is complex, especially for those whose spiritual beliefs are

based in traditional religious contexts, and is highly underrepresented in research literature. Researchers do not have a complex understanding of how culture, gender and spirituality intersect for women, especially American Indian women (Trimble & Gonzalea, 2008).

Allen (1992) provides one theoretical perspective to consider when studying gender, feminism, sexism, and spirituality from an American Indian perspective. She has embraced what she refers to as *tribal-feminism*. Allen boldly states that "a feminist approach to the study and teaching of American Indian life and thought is essential because the area has been so dominated by paternalistic, male-dominated modes of consciousness since the first writings about American Indians in the fifteenth century" (p.222). Allen states when examining gender roles in American Indian research it is important to do so from a tribal-feminist view and not a mainstream feminist point of view. She explains this eloquently below.

> Analyzing tribal cultural systems from a mainstream feminist point of view allows an otherwise overlooked insight into the complex interplay of factors that have led to the systematic loosening of tribal ties, the disruption of tribal cohesion and complexity, and the growing disequilibrium of cultures that were anciently based on a belief in balance, relationship, and centrality of women, particularly elder women. A feminist approach reveals not only the exploitation and oppression of the tribes by whites and white government but also areas of oppression within the tribes and the sources and nature of that oppression. To a large extent, such an analysis can provided strategies for ameliorating the effects of patriarchal colonialism, enabling many of the tribes to reclaim their ancient

gynarchical (social organization of women in power but not domination), egalitarian, and sacred traditions. (p.223)

The problem with tribal-feminism is that many American Indian women incorrectly assume feminism is concerned with issues that have little to do with them. As stated in the introduction, American Indian women believe feminism is white dominated and are correct in this assumption. Mainstream feminism is, in many ways, not concerned with non-white sexism issues, however this does not mean sexism does not exist among American Indian populations (Allen, 1992). According to Allen (1992) American Indian women, because of their own fear of and bitterness toward whites, do not examine the sexism involved in the dynamics of white socialization and how it impacts them. This is not to say that sexism did not exist before colonization but it has increased many times over since colonization (Allen, 1992). In fact, American Indian men, who have benefited in certain ways from white male centeredness on individual levels, are even more likely to disregard feminism. More simply, feminism as a whole is viewed as white, negative, and useless to American Indian women (Allen, 1992). Sexism, both inherent in the culture and that brought by whites, is working to weaken cultural identities. This means, according to Allen (1992), that viewing tribal traditions from any other perspective but a tribal-feminist one is neglecting the fullness of the traditions. She even goes as far as to say that those who study American Indians have neglected to study their traditions and customs accurately because of their lack of focus on women and that the destruction of women has paralleled the destruction of the context with which many American Indian traditions and customs should be examined.

Finally, it is important to also consider that feminism, at least as it has existed for several decades, may not be optimal and in some cases detrimental to women of color. In her book *Red Pedagogy: American Indian Social and Political Thought*, Sandy Grande (2004), who refers to feminism as "whitestream feminism" states she "believes the well-documented failure of whitestream feminists to engage race and acknowledge the complicity of white women in the history of domination positions it alongside other colonialist discourses." (p. 124). Grande states she is not a feminist, but rather an *indigena* which loosely translated means "indigenous woman." Grande vehemently refuses to identify with the label of feminist because she believes in the contributions feminism have had on the oppression of women of color. She explains below.

> Some American Indian women continue to hold white women in disdain as they are first and foremost perceived as constituents of the same white supremacy and colonialism that oppresses all Indians. Thus, in contrast to dominant modes of feminist critique that locate women's oppression in the structures of patriarchy, this analysis is premised on the understanding that the collective oppression of indigenous women is primarily an effect of colonialism – a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism. (p. 124)

Grande's overall message in her book is not only about feminist viewpoints but dominant modes of thought as a whole and she questions these modes of thought and encourages others to do the same. She encourages the indigenous people to highly critique dominant versions of reality and create new indigenous-based ways of thinking

and being in the world. In a way, what she describes is a returning to indigenous ways within a modern context.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore, understand and describe the experiences of American Indians who participate in sweat purification ceremonies and to compare and contrast the experiences of women and men. This is important because it allows us to explore gender differences in a Non-Western spiritual area. The researchers chose to study sweat ceremonies specifically because it provided a focus area to explore differences. This study can inform counselors about the intricacies of working with an American Indian population and, through the specificity of studying the sweat purification ceremony, better understand the spirituality, culture and ideas about well-being for American Indian clients. Finally, this study assisted in exploring the differences between the experiences of men and women during these ceremonies and provided some meaningful information about culture through an American Indian feminist lens.

Research Design

Generic Qualitative Research. As the purpose of this study was to explore, understand and describe the experiences of American Indians who participate in sweat purification ceremonies, generic qualitative research methods were employed. The researchers chose qualitative methodology because it allows deeper understanding and insight into the experiences of individuals by relying on the individual's report of their experiences (Kelly, 2009). Merriam (1998) discussed that qualitative methods allow researchers to explore the individual perspectives and worldviews of the participants being studied. Below are the rationales for choosing qualitative research for this study.

First, qualitative research supports the idea of constructivism (Rossmen & Rallis, 2003). In qualitative research this is the notion that "reality is an interpretive phenomenon, and that meaning is constructed by participants as they go about their everyday life" (Rossmen & Rallis, 2003, p 65). As this study hopes to gain understanding about the experiences of participants, qualitative inquiry is optimal.

Second, it is also important to consider the use of quantitative methods of exploring such topics as American Indian Sweat ceremonies. "Whereas quantitative methods can enable the researcher to get a broad understanding of a phenomenon, qualitative approaches are able to delve into complex processes and illustrate the multifaceted nature of human phenomena" (Morrow, 2007, p 211). The problems that arise using quantitative methods to explore topics like the ones in this study are well captured by Merchant and Dupuy (1996). They state that "although the positivistic reductive methods of quantitative research may fit the European conceptual system, they may be lacking in investigations on the basis of more holistic and nonlinear worldviews" (p 538). It is important then to consider that American Indians tend to have a more holistic and nonlinear view of the world and thus qualitative methodology is likely better able to explain the phenomenon at hand.

Third, it is important to understand that qualitative methods "can be used to explore variables that are not easily identifiable or that have not yet been identified, as well as investigating topics for which there is little or no previous research" (Morrow, 2007, p. 211). As stated previously, in counseling psychology, research studies on American Indian sweat purification ceremonies are few and the intersection of American Indian culture, spirituality, and gender is fairly non-existent.

Finally, given the complex nature of culture, spirituality, and gender, qualitative research is needed to fully explore the topics at hand. Most important is considering the origins of qualitative methods. Morrow (2007) stated "qualitative research methods have their earliest roots in the work of anthropologists and sociologists as they attempted to understand cultures of "the others," peoples whose cultures differed from European and, later, American dominant paradigms" (p. 220). Because the origins of qualitative research come out of a need to study non-European phenomena, it is understandable that the researchers in this study would choose such methodology to study American Indian sweat purification ceremonies.

Focus Groups. Focus groups were utilized in order to gather the most meaningful data possible. While the researchers considered that utilizing focus groups to explore this topic might cause the participants to be influenced by one another, the researchers chose to utilize focus groups for several reasons. First, the impact of interactions between participants could give the researchers a different level of understanding. Second, sweat purification ceremonies are experienced in groups, and often groups of only men or women will participate in sweat purification ceremonies together, which is how the groups were split in this study, by gender. Finally, in a focus group setting the researchers were able to be less involved and allow participants to discuss the questions amongst themselves. This could not have occurred in one-on-one interviews. It is also important to consider that one of the primary researchers, despite her American Indian heritage, appears white, and participants may have been more hesitant to share ideas with her in a one-on-one interview. This researcher's ability to

simply allow participants to interact and discuss the topic likely led to more detailed qualitative data than would have been gathered in one-on-one interviews.

Participants

Original participants recruited for this study were men and women between the ages of 18 and 64 who had participated in more than 2 sweat purification ceremonies. However, only the American Indian participants were included in the current study. Researchers specifically recruited individuals who participated in a minimum of two sweat lodge ceremonies because participants with multiple exposures to sweat purification ceremonies would have more experiences to draw from. The range for number of sweat purification ceremonies attended, for participants included in this study, was 10-1000. The individuals were recruited from the researchers' existing social networks and through snowball sampling. Because the researchers' already knew individuals who participated in sweat purification ceremonies they contacted those men and women to participate and also ask them for other names and phone numbers for individuals they knew who participated in sweat purification ceremonies. Focus groups were split by gender. There were two focus groups of women with three participants each and there were two focus groups of men, one consisted of three participants and the other consisted of two participants. While there were originally 11 participants, only those participants who self identified as American Indian were included. The total number of participants for this study was N=8, with four women and four men participating. Please see table 1 in Appendix A for demographic information about participants.

Reflexivity

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), the researcher exists as a part of the world that he or she studies. This is especially true in this study as both the primary researchers have been participants in sweat purification ceremonies and been involved in other American Indian spiritual ceremonies. The two primary researchers were present at each focus group when data was collected. One of the primary researchers is a thirty year-old Cherokee/Caucasian female doctoral student in Counseling Psychology, who has participated in two American Indian sweat purification ceremonies and several other American Indian ceremonies and dances. The second primary researcher is a fifty-seven year old Cherokee/Choctaw male professor in psychology. He has participated in approximately 425 sweat purification ceremonies and hundreds of other American Indian ceremonies and dances throughout his life. Both of the primary researchers had participated in sweat purification ceremonies with some of the participants in this study. The rapport that had been established between the researchers and some of the participants allowed the researchers to gain insider information that may have been difficult to gain otherwise. This emic (insider) knowledge also likely facilitated some of the conversations in the focus groups and allowed the participants to discuss their experiences without having to first educate the researchers on the process of a sweat purification ceremony. The researchers have also included a statement regarding subjectivity that can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

Focus group interviews were conducted at an academic facility at the University of Oklahoma. A demographic questionnaire was given to all participants (See

Appendix D). A semi-structured interview format was used in the focus group interviews. Open-ended interview questions were prepared and used to guide the interviews (See Appendix E). However, all questions were not specifically asked as the information obtained through conversation answered the questions prepared. Focus group interviews lasted from 1-1.5 hours. Focus group interviews were recorded on a tape and digital recorder and transcribed by the researchers.

Data Analysis

Researchers used a generic thematic analysis to reduce the focus group transcripts into themes that reflect the context of the transcripts (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The researchers independently read the transcripts of the focus group interviews. Researchers coded specific remarks in the transcripts. The researchers then compared codes and through discussion added, deleted, merged and modified codes as necessary. A high level of agreement between researchers was achieved.

Refined codes were then compared, contrasted, and combined into similar patterns, which created broad and more abstract categories. Categories were formulated into meanings and the meanings were developed into themes. The researchers eventually reached a point where new information no longer provided new further insight and the themes were deemed saturated. These themes resulted in the results section of this report. Member checks (Patton, 2002) were also used to increase the trustworthiness of the study. Researchers asked participants to read and comment on the themes and quotes. Four of the participants responded to our request for member checks, and their feedback was used for clarification. No misinterpretations were noted

from the participants that reviewed the themes and quotes and minimal clarification was noted. A summary of the results of the analysis is below.

Chapter 4: Results

The researchers agreed upon five themes. One theme, the strongest of the five, was central to the other four subthemes and is identified as the primary theme. It should also be noted that each of the subthemes connected to one another as well as the primary theme. The primary theme identified was Interconnectedness. The four subthemes identified were Genderlessness/Gender Balance, Physical Healing, Psychological Healing, and Escape.

A very powerful and central model to a number of American Indian tribes is the Medicine Wheel (See figure 1 in Appendix C). While the wheel looks slightly different between tribes, common between all tribes is that the wheel is divided into four parts. The four parts represent different things such as cardinal directions, seasons, and often the four aspects of life or the four parts of one's self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

It became apparent to the researchers that each of the subthemes gathered also seemed to fit into a similar 4 part circle with Interconnectedness at the center. A model was developed, inspired by the medicine wheel, to better represent the themes discovered and how they impact and interact with one another (see figure 2 in Appendix C). Note how the subthemes revolve around the central theme of Interconnectedness and that all themes provide support for and receive support from the other themes. It is also important to point out that, due to the interconnectedness of the themes, many of the quotes referenced here could easily be placed under a different theme heading. The researchers have attempted to explain a cultural phenomenon (American Indian) using a structure that is outside that culture (linear). The notion that the truth is the whole and

that everything is connected is central to American Indian spiritualities and applies in this study as well.

Finally, exploring the themes, it is should be noted that the gender of participant is reported only in the genderlessness section. This is for two reasons. First, the genderlessness subtheme is the only theme that the researchers noticed differences between men and women. Second, as we discuss later, being divided or separated by gender runs counter to the experiences to our participants' experiences. For these two reasons we have decided to only note the gender of the particular participant (with a W or M) in the section on genderlessness/gender balance. The genders of participants can also be found in the Demographic Table in Appendix A.

Primary Theme: Interconnectedness

The primary theme that the researchers found in this study was interconnectedness. This is the idea that the individuals in the sweat lodge are not only connected to each other but also to things of the earth (trees, water, rocks) and everything around them. Participants discussed this phenomenon as both literal and metaphorical. In a literal sense interconnectedness was said to be achieved through the process of breathing the moist air that had been created through pouring water on the rocks heated by the fire. By this process the participants reported being connected to the air, water, rocks, fire and each other by breathing in the moist air. In the metaphorical sense, interconnectedness was discussed as a feeling of care for others, whether they were in the lodge or not.

Another aspect of interconnectedness that participants reported was the loss of self. They reported that when "all is one" then the self disappears and separation, or the

things that identify individuals as separate, are no longer present. Important in achieving this loss of self was the need for darkness. Participants frequently referred to the darkness as a necessary part of losing the self so they could be a part of (interconnectedness) others and things of the earth.

Finally, participants often expressed the idea of interconnectedness in comparison to the separateness they felt while attending services in Christian-based churches. One of the most profound emphasis' was that in American Indian spirituality, nature was not only uncorrupted as opposed to Christian belief, but that it, including human beings who are part of nature, can be directly experienced in its uncorrupted healing aspect. Ultimately, God and human beings are not separate from creation. The assumption is that our participants could have a direct, unmediated revelation from Nature.

Quotes:

Participant 1. Yes absolutely, but not only with other people in there, in the lodge, but we are connected. We are brothers and sisters and when we go out into the world that connections stays.

Participant 2. You know I think some people feel more connected because of the darkness in the lodge so they feel more safe to be able to cry and express themselves. Where out in the daylight they may not be able to express that as much. Sometimes it's a façade that can be so strong out here but in the lodge you can be gentle and meek and nurturing to cry or whatever. I think some people experience it as a safe place to do that.

Participant 4. It helped teach me how to be, not to do, not to try and be Um but

just to be present Um and not only just be with myself, but also to be in the presence of somebody else and to be with them. I don't know if I've ever said a lot of this I don't know how it's going to come out but in the sweat lodge sometimes its as though I feel as though I become the mist in the air. There are no boundaries necessarily between me and um the living things around me, people, nature whatever you want to call it. And I've taken that into the rest of my life. There's no differences and that we're all connected and to feel that connection.

Participant 5. I feel the earth, I feel mother earth and then um the rocks, we call them grandfathers because they are some of the oldest things on earth, I mean that's proven. They give nutrients and absorb nutrients and keep things alive here on earth. And so I respect for that. I couldn't be here without rocks and then the water, of course we know our bodies are made of water and the earth needs water and its another source of life. The traditional stories about water and our dances. After we sweat we usually dance. The drinking dance to honor the water. So it reminds me again of these connections I have to these things. Water is keeping me alive. And then fire is there and Hashtahli, our word for god, um literally combining the word Hashi which means the sun and tahli which means to furnish. So meaning like the sun gives unconditionally. The fire is really really important to be. It's that energy of god.

Participant 7. For me it's not like uh, like I used to go to church and have to all bow our heads and pray. It doesn't feel like that at all. It doesn't, it's hard to explain, it doesn't feel like I'm talking to a guy, and having a conversation. I feel like I'm being connected to everyone else, the other people and the trees and the interconnectedness that's what I feel when I'm in there praying.

Participant 6. Here we're a part of everything that's around us and at church there's that separation. You do this. I do this. Don't come over here. There's just separation. There's no connection.

Participant 8. Either Christianity or my traditional spirituality. And I wouldn't even say it's a religion per say. It's more spiritual. Where I would view Christianity as more religious. Set of rules, Um. One of the biggest things for me that set for me was whenever we went on, I can't even remember what it was for, but I remember it was a trip with all the other church kids and everything, and there was a sweat lodge and some ceremony grounds behind this other Indian church. They talked about all the drugs that the people did and how bad it was. And they were talking about these Indians but they were talking about us too. And uh so I remember thinking and I remember going through that and thinking, "this is supposed to be bad but I'm supposed to do this" (participant is referencing peyote ceremonies). You know there's no way out of it. You're going to be bad either way. And then some of my experiences with the peyote religion, you know, it's hard to find. You know you're going to find one of two versions. You're going to find the version that really engrains Christianity and brings in that church part, the Native American church, and I understand why they did it back in the day. They were trying to get permission to use peyote and the eagle feathers and things like that, they had to put in that (Christian) aspect to make people happy I guess. But people got really engrained with it. So I try to go to the more traditional, the old ways.

Subtheme 1: Genderlessness/Gender Balance

The first subtheme is most easily described as Genderlessness. The idea of a

lack of gender was a strong theme when participants were asked about their experiences with gender in sweat purification ceremonies. When asked about gender roles the word "balance" was used frequently but what the reader will notice through the quotes is that the genderlessness that was experienced was achieved through an intricate balance of roles or parts played by different individuals. Some participants referenced these roles as "women's" and "men's" but some participants hesitated to identify individuals in that way because of those word's meanings in Western language. Specifically, some participants were able to identify "masculine" and "feminine" energies, but masculine energies were not inextricably linked to men, and feminine energies were not inextricably linked to women. While participants often alluded to women and men having different physical roles in the sweat purification ceremonies, none of the participants reported finding these different roles to be hierarchical in nature, but rather that they were achieving a "balance" in order for gender to disappear.

Participants also discussed the idea that gender isn't present because separation isn't present. The interconnectedness is so strong that things that make one an individual, such as gender, disappear and all are one. This idea is summarized quite well in the first quote under this theme.

In this section, the researcher notes whether the quote is from a woman or a man (W or M) as they identified themselves on the Demographic Information Form. The women were more likely to discuss gender roles in more vague ways than the men. While they were not critical of gender roles, they also appeared to be cautious about discussion the rationale's for gender roles. It should be noted that, though hesitant to discuss rationale's regarding gender roles, the women were not critical of their

experience due to gender and reported the same idea of experiencing a genderlessness through a loss of self. The men on the other hand were much more likely to explain the rationale's for gender roles and explained the importance of those roles from a cultural perspective.

Finally, the researchers must note that the very nature of exploring gender was likely, and understandably, offensive to some of our participants. By nature of conducting the study the researchers were applying dominant/Westernized cultural values or viewpoints (Gender, research methodology) to a ceremony that exists outside of that context. The very nature of this act was likely, at best, frustrating, and, at worst, offensive to some of our participants. For this, the researchers are truly apologetic. The hope is that through this process, participants were given a voice to explain their unique views.

Quotes:

Participant 5 (M) What were trying to get at too is that in a lodge everything's black. There isn't gender, there isn't color, there isn't any of those things. There's just one. There's that connectedness.

Participant 1 (W). And being a feminist I had a lot of struggle with some of the beginnings of understanding that (Roles). If I only look at it that way I'm looking at it in a biased way. Like you say, (another participant), there's value in both women and men participating. It's not looking at the men having all the power it can be looked at in a different way you know the women having a lot of power too and the men are upholding that, respecting that.

Participant 5 (M). I mean the sexes is a colonized thing. We didn't think like

that so it's hard to answer that question. The words that we know as male and female the way I've looked it up linguistically is that things aren't (pause) it's more of an energy and a way of being. Personally what we would see as male-bodied, we would sometimes see as female. The role of, what we would see in America now, as the female bodied. So it was more about roles. From feminist, "roles" can sound crazy, "you can't give us roles," Well our ways there was roles and that was a good thing, it kept things balanced. It kept things the way it needed to be in our society. The way I've been taught, the roles of the hoyo or the woman or feminine energy in the lodge, were medicine holders, they hold the cedar, they put the cedar on the rocks, they, I probably can't disclose too much but there are roles for women. Men are on one side of the lodge and women are on the other. Uh, and in all honesty I don't know the reason for that in Chahta way. I couldn't even tell you. At that point I'm trying to follow, I'm trying to honor the way my ancestors did things. And I hope that they understand that's what I'm trying to do and I'm not doing it wrong. But there are female-bodied medicine people. I don't know of any tribe that doesn't have female medicine people. So I don't know. I know there's roles.

Participant 2 (W). Not for me because I'm both. Um even though traditionally males usually lead sweats but in a mixed lodge I am both because I'm gay. And so I don't have a role issue because of gender. Even though I'm in a dress I'm still respect the tradition to wear a dress even though I'm not always comfortable in a dress. So It doesn't really bother me.

Participant 8 (M). Maybe that it's (gender) not payed attention to in some aspects. But I think the inherent roles that come with it just. You know that when you do

*look at those things its just cohesive…….*It's like all you know it's interlocking, it's one, theres a balance to it*Whenever you're dissecting it from the outside you're looking at all those roles. But whenever youre sitting in there the point it that there's no. No time, no space. You're there and you're not there. So those roles matter outside of that room but in there nothing matters.*

Participant 1 (W). The biggest thing that stands out to me though is um in the sweat by the end I feel as though everybody is humbled and so gender is not seen, at least to me. Gender doesn't seem to be as present.

Subtheme 2: Physical Healing

The second subtheme is physical healing. Participants referenced the idea that sweat purification ceremonies are frequently used for healing. This healing can be emotional (to be discussed in the next subtheme) or physical in nature. Participants frequently referenced the physical release of toxins through sweating and that this improved physical health. One participant gave credit to the sweat ceremony for inciting him to go to the doctor where he discovered that he had diabetes.

Several participants felt it important to point out that, traditionally, individuals who participate in sweat purification ceremonies do not pray for themselves, but rather pray for others. Through praying for others, and because of the interconnectedness discussed earlier, prayers for others is, in turn, a prayer for one's self. By seeking the healing of others one heals oneself. Again, the participants cited the awareness of one's interconnection with all things as part of healing.

Quotes:

Participant 1. Feeling close to myself, to nature to other people in the lodge to, this is a little stereotypical but to everybody on earth. We are all connected. We are all related. And so I think it really helps me to, not only that I'm a part of everybody and everything but when we pray in the lodge we are praying for everybody and we're connected to helping those who are sick and those who are in need of something.

Participant 6. It healed me. It showed me things I was doing to my body. I think my diabetes would have been worse. I would have lost a leg or something. When I was in that sweat one time it showed me that. My leg went numb and the sweat showed me that I needed to do something else and get myself checked out. You're denying things; let me show you it said. It woke me up. I went to the doctor the next day and that's when I got diagnosed with diabetes and it was the sweat that made me go.

Participant 5. Not just for yourself but that it heals people. The power within us to heal things outside of us.

Participant 2. Well I've released the toxins that are in my body so I feel more whole. I feel healthier.

Participant 3. There is a purification. You boil water to purify the water, you boil your body to purify your body.

Subtheme 3: Psychological Healing

The third subtheme is Psychological Healing. When participants discussed healing they rarely only spoke of physical healing, but also included emotional or psychological healing. Participants often alluded to this aspect of healing as a release from the things that impact them emotionally and an ability to take the peace they feel

with them when they return to their day-to-day lives.

Participants again made allusions to the primary unitary awareness from which every other insight or healing proceeds. The connections are not only related to things and beings in the world but also about integrating all aspects of one's inner self. Several participants also discussed the way the sweat lodge allows them to feel more like themselves and that sweating had become inextricably linked to their identity.

Most of the participants made the contention that sweat lodge experience was cathartic. It was clear that for some words were not sufficient to express the deep feelings that needed expressing. They discussed how they connected to mother earth, and some discussed crying. Some claimed to experience anger about the colonialization their people suffered from or from more current stressors (to be discussed further in subtheme 4). Some seemed to mourn for a loss of cultural identity while others fell into a state of profound appreciation for life itself.

Quotes:

Participant 2: I've cried through a whole sweat before and not said a word. And no one's even bothered me. And that's really healing to be able to just cry and let it all out. It's a safe place for me to do that……. I feel more grounded. Yeah I'm more balanced. Before I ever started sweating I always went out in nature to get balance. I had to. I couldn't find it in the church. But in the sweat lodge I find a balance and a connection to.

Participant 3. And they prayed and they cried and we talked. And one woman said "you want me to open the flap" and I said "sure." And everyone came out and was joyous and I thought I want to do this again.

Participant 6. I guess the build up of a lot of stresses of things, not just at work or maybe home life, family drama, drama here and there. Things you see on TV or things around the world or things that kind of bother you about what is going on. So it can weigh heavily on a person. So with that, the lodge, it relieves that. Say prayers to hopefully to just give thanks, maybe not for myself but for somebody else.

Participant 7. I feel like in there I have a sense of identity. I remember growing up thinking black kids and white kids, they had. I didn't know how to explain it back then but they had a sense of identity. Like black kids listen to rap music and talk a certain way and white kids listen to country and talk a certain way and like yall have these groups and I was stuck and was Indian and I didn't know where I was. I mean I think that's why some people cling to those mascots because they don't know what their identity is so they take that. In there (the sweat lodge) I know exactly who I am.

Participant 3. It starts the grief process. But before I was looking at it like a psychologist you know the shock, the anger, the grieving and the acceptance. It's looking at those kind of processes in the natural grief processes. It's death to self. Selfishness.

Subtheme 4: Escape

The fourth, and final, subtheme is Escape. Participants, described escaping from dominant culture and the way they think about the world when they are in a sweat lodge. They described their ability to be themselves, rather than act out the self they feel is prescribed by dominant culture. Participants talked about how important it was for them to have a ritual (sweat purification ceremonies) that was similar to what their ancestors did in order to feel connected to their culture. One participant even described

this need for escape as a requirement for him to not kill himself (see quote 2).

One of the most common perspectives shared was that the ceremony gave participants a different perspective. The perspective is intricately tied to relinquishing the aggressive, controlling, colonizing, self-serving way of being that had been hoisted upon them. In the lodge, participants described being able to let go and merge into their larger being that is part of Nature. Some participants were not reluctant to name Western religion and other forms of colonization as forces of suffocating enclosure. In the lodge, participants claimed they could re-inhabit their cultural identities even if it was only momentarily.

Quotes:

Participant 1. It's helped me be a person not, again not a citizen, I can be in my therapy office and look at things in a different light because I'm a human being.

Participant 5. Well the only word I can think of for that power is Hashtahli and um it's kind of our word for "god" or the creator of all things. It's our word for all things. I don't feel that a lot when I'm outside of the lodge. And it's hard for me to get into a state of um believing in things outside of myself, but for some reason when I'm in the lodge I'm kind of disappearing from colonization a little bit, from all my ego things. And I get to become balanced and grounded again. I get to become a part of the circle again, of all things. And the way I believe personally, I've been taught that lodges aren't about recruiting or making people believe the way you do, even your own tribal members. And that makes us feel good to disappear for a second and become all things again. The rocks, and the water and the fire. All the elements and I'm a part of that and it makes me happy again to be a part of Hashtahli, or god, or that energy that's in

all things. Like he said, the relief that I think about is the relief from NDN colonization and this world that I don't feel connected to any more. I can't live without ceremony, I couldn't. I would kill myself without ceremony. There's no doubt in my mind. That's what the relief means to me and the spirit of Hashtahli.

Participant 3. Well I think that's why it has always felt like two worlds. Because in the Indian world, in that spiritual world, that's who we are and that's where we are. And sometimes we know we're not going to be understood.

Participant 7. Like living in our environment is uh. I always have to be somewhere at a certain time or turn in homework due at a certain time and everything is all rushed and we focus on the clock. We have to, you know everything is about time. In there it feels good to, like all that other stuff doesn't matter in there. You know it feels good to do something that my ancestors were doing. You know to have that sense of like I'm not in this environment, I don't have to worry about all that extra stuff I was worrying about. Be like they were. They never worried about, like all the time, not just in the lodge. But that's what keeps me going back. That's why I like it.

Participant 5. A lot of times I feel like I'm a prisoner of America. I've felt like that for a long time. Since I was a kid I felt like I didn't belong here. And that's a weird feeling to have as a "Native American." But I mean people came in and took our way of life. It's impossible to live that way now completely. But the idea of escaping is I get to leave the prison for a little bit. I get to take that mask off. We don't get to be real Indians a lot out here. We aren't allowed to be. It's been awhile since we've been allowed to be, especially in the city, us urban Indians. It's a rare thing to be able to relax again and take that American flag off our back.

Participant 6. I don't feel alone is the main thing for me is I don't feel alone anymore. I feel like I get back to something, going back home. Feeling natural and you know, don't be so um, I mean we live in the city. What's the Oklahoma City population? A million something and yet I still feel alone at times with all these people, that are around me but when I go there I don't feel alone. The people that are in there with me are part of our connections. Like he was saying I feel like I'm part of something bigger than myself. So it's that I don't feel alone anymore.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Clinical Implications

Healing. Probably the most common response the primary researchers received from people when discussing this study is "what does that have to do with counseling?" The answer to this question is complex but lies in the essence of what counselors do. Counselors help people to heal. Duncan, Miller, Wampold, and Hubble (2009) claim that one of the requirements for any counseling theoretical orientation to be effective is agreement on how the client will become better, or be healed. If this agreement cannot be reached then counseling, and healing, cannot take place. When working with American Indian clients, being well informed of the intricacies of American Indian culture, especially with regard to healing, is important. In order to come to an agreement about the way a counselor is going to help an American Indian client, the counselor must understand how the client views healing.

One factor in both the physical and psychological healing themes that repeatedly appeared was the idea that individuals attending sweat purification ceremonies do not pray for themselves, but rather pray for others. This is important to consider from a counseling perspective because counselor's expectations are often that clients should focus on themselves in order to heal. This focus on the self may seem unfamiliar and illogical to an American Indian client. Another important aspect of not focusing (praying) on one's self was that, due to inter-connectedness, focusing on others or the earth, was in turn focusing on the self because all are connected.

If there is such a thing as historic trauma, the participants in this study embodied

it. There were many references to old American Indian wisdom and ways. Participants freely acknowledged that they were suffering psychologically. They noted being bothered by their values and cultural expressions being demeaned in every-day life. They appeared to believe profoundly that the way of their healing would involve traditional forms of healing not available in other venues. They noted a desire for darkness, earth elements, traditional chanting, a uniquely communal spirit, and connections with nature. They believed that their people had created a unique space to get back to being human. This is another aspect of healing that counselors cannot ignore.

Identity issues were paramount in the participants' comments related to well-being. They were expressed with a variety of emotions, such as fear, anger, and sorrow. The fear and loneliness expressed in one participant's comment that without ceremony, he would kill himself cannot be ignored. The remark should alert us to the desperateness that many American Indians may feel; especially considering that the lowest estimates of suicide rates among American Indians is 10 times the rate of the rest of the U.S. population (Indian Health Services, 2015). The oft times bitter, and even judgmental remarks about Christianity should be listened to rather than reacted to. Christian therapists might consider how they may feel if they had been through a similar religious assimilation process as described in the literature review of this paper. Before any form of tolerance or acceptance of diversity in religion should be entertained, American Indians struggle to maintain their spiritual beliefs should be validated and their feelings ventilated. When working with American Indian clients therapists would do well to engage in self-reflection with a critical eye.

Much like counseling clients, participants noted they felt a greater sense of support as well as an ability to feel and express emotions in a safe environment. Knowing this, it is no wonder that sweat purification ceremonies are used in two tribal based drug and alcohol treatment facilities in the state of Oklahoma and at several others across the United States (Indian Health Services, 2015). The use of sweat purification ceremonies, especially for American Indians, is at least useful and, at most, a necessary part of healing.

It is with caution that the researchers provide this general information about working with American Indian clients. There are many different tribes and belief systems and it is important to understand the beliefs of individual clients before working with them in a therapeutic context.

Gender. A primary goal of this study was to explore how gender interacts with culture. While the male participants in this study were more willing to explain gender dynamics, even they seemed hesitant to fully discuss gender. However, the women seemed more dismissive of gender as a discussion topic. They talked about gender role differences and repeatedly stated that their gender did not impact their experience but seemed hesitant to explain gender from an American Indian perspective. Men were much more likely to discuss gender from an American Indian perspective. Researchers must consider that the women's hesitancy could be due to internalized sexism. Specifically, that the women's denial of gender impacting experience had more to do with their own internalized belief that women are inferior to men. However, there is a second, and the researchers think, more plausible, idea. The idea is that gender cannot be viewed within an American Indian cultural context as it is in a Westernized,

predominantly Caucasian cultural context. Participants first described that the concept of gender, as it is commonly used, exists within the context of Western culture. Second, they expressed that feminism is a response to sexism that exists within Western, dominant culture, not necessarily in American Indian culture. It is vital to remember that if one views the American Indian sweat purification ceremonies through the lens of Western feminism, it may lead to faulty interpretations. For example, some Western feminists could view men and women sitting on different sides of the sweat lodge as "unequal," but from an American Indian feminist lens this could be viewed as "balanced."

Finally, several times participants alluded to ideas presented in the literature review from Sandy Grande about "white stream" feminism and its impact on oppressing women of color. When some of the participants discussed sweating practices and the roles that are filled by men or women, one could see that they struggled to explain this within the context of white culture. A good example of this is when one participant said, "I know there aren't supposed to be roles" when he discussed gender and feminism. The researchers could tell that this participant was trying to explain the roles of men and women in the sweat lodge, but realized, as he spoke, that from a mainstream feminist perspective the term "roles" may not be received positively. This is important to understand because of the way modern feminism has influenced parts of dominant culture and ways of viewing the world. This particular participant was understandably cautious because of his awareness of how he may be perceived by a dominant, white feminist, viewpoint. This is clinically important because clinicians must be cautious to not apply mainstream feminist-influenced values to American Indian clients.

Lastly, the researchers expected to hear about gender issues in more depth. Participants on the whole were uncomfortable discussing these issues, which are so pertinent to Western, dominate society. The cautiousness researchers met from participants taught the researchers that gender is not an easy topic to breach among more traditional American Indians, especially American Indian women. They appeared to have little confidence in our capacity to understand the complexity and the differences they experienced with regard to these topics. The participants certainly did not want the researchers to impose a conservative, liberal, or other dominant ideology upon their interactions. While many may believe the roles the participants described to be sexist, the participants warned the researchers to be careful about such judgments. The belief that true wisdom has been gradually occluded through time appeared to cause the participants to have more assurance in ancient wisdom over technology, capitalism, and western democracy.

Limitations

There are four primary limitations of this study which should be considered when examining the results. First, one limitation of many qualitative research studies is the ability to generalize the results to a broad population. Due to the small sample size the researchers strongly caution readers with regard to generalizability. The purpose of qualitative research, according to Heppner, Kivlinghan, & Wampold (1999), however, is applicability rather than generalizability. Also, given the nature of the subject matter, it would have been folly to use quantitative methods to explore the given topic.

A second limitation of this methodology is that it does not allow the researchers to make causal inferences. Rather, the data gathered is studied for common ideas,

unique differences, and overall themes that can provide invaluable information about the experiences of individuals from non-dominant cultures.

Third, there are many different American Indian tribes that utilize sweat purification ceremonies and thus many different cultural perspectives. Only a few different tribal cultures are represented in this study. This is especially important when considering gender. Only one participant identified being a member of a matriarchal tribe, rather than patriarchal, and this likely impacted the results.

Finally, the necessity that the participants speak English limits the understanding of the culture/s being studied. One participant openly expressed his feelings about how the use of using the English language has impacted him and how participating in sweat purification ceremonies has helped him escape.

> *This ugly language coming out of my mouth that I hear every day. That hurts me. Knowing that's what I think in, that I don't think in what my grandparents did. That hurts me. And for a second I do, when I shut up and I'm still.*

Acknowledging the loss of understanding due to the use of English is an important research limitation but also important to consider in practice with clients of other cultures. Though some participants did speak in their native languages at some points (explaining what words meant) they expressed a frustration with having English be their primary language. Like this participant stated he "thinks" in English and this hurts him.

It became apparent through the study that using the English language made speaking about gender particularly difficult for the participants. This is likely because the intersection of gender and race becomes increasingly complex when studying a

cultural history through contextual idioms not native to that culture (Smith, 1999). Specifically, the use of English, forces American Indian history to be documented using a gendered language that is not present in different American Indian languages. The enactment of different historical ideas about men and women through social institutions such as marriage, family, and a class system pushes researchers to examine a history in a manner that it was not meant to be understood (Smith, 1999). Gender distinctions and hierarchies are encoded in Western language, and for indigenous people, it is impossible to translate or interpret their societies into English (Smith, 1999). Therefore it is important to note that this study is limited in its ability to capture the fullness of the experience of American Indian people by nature of its language and western formalized methodologies.

Future Research

As stated in the introduction, counseling research that focuses on the use of American Indian culture is limited so future research areas within this cultural context are many. However, a few areas that may be the most beneficial when working with American Indian clients or clients that have belief systems based in American Indian culture are provided. Further exploration into American Indian cultural beliefs about healing are particularly important given the need to better understand how to work with American Indian clients in counseling settings. Further research on incorporating traditional healing beliefs and ceremonies would also likely be useful.

Also, further research into gender dynamics and how gender exists within American Indian cultural contexts will be important. Sweat purification ceremonies are only one American Indian based ceremony that exists in relation to healing.

Exploration into other ceremonies, to broaden understanding, or further exploration into American Indian sweat purification ceremonies within a certain tribe, to gain a better detailed understanding, would both be useful as well. Additionally, further exploration into the intersection between American Indian spirituality through an American Indian feminist lens would be invaluable. Overall, simply understanding that healing exists within a cultural context and exploring Non-Western cultural beliefs about healing is important for Counseling Psychology as a field and further research in these areas is needed.

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Appendix A: Tables

	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity/Tribal Affiliation	Appox. Number of Sweats Attended
Group 1				
Participant 1	F	49	Caucasian/Cherokee	90
Participant 2	F	58	Choctaw/Chickasaw	1000
Participant 3	F	52	German/Irish/Cherokee	500
Group 2				
Participant 4	F	38	Delaware/Caucasian	50
Group 3				
Participant 5	M	28	Chahta	100
Participant 6	M	42	Muskoke	100
Participant 7	M	23	Chahta	10
Group 4				
Participant 8	M	26	Numunu	12

Table 1. Demographic Information

Appendix B: Subjectivity Statement

As this is a qualitative methodological study, it is important to review the backgrounds and perspective of the researchers completing the data collection and analysis.

One of the primary researchers is a thirty year-old Cherokee/Caucasian female doctoral student in Counseling Psychology, who has participated in two American Indian sweat purification ceremonies and several other American Indian ceremonies and dances. This primary researcher, despite her American Indian heritage, appears white and has not experienced negative consequences of appearing to be a person of color. There are likely both positive and negative consequences as a result of this researcher's ability to "pass" as white. This researcher's lived experiences as a Caucasian individual likely influence her perspective and allow her to be more objective when examining data. However, it is likely that some participants were less likely to disclose certain information to her due to her white appearance. This negative impact is likely countered by the presence of the second researcher and the use of focus groups rather than individual interviews, as discussed in the reflexivity section. This researcher has been formally educated in American Indian tribal customs and has studied tribal feminism as it relates to dominate culture.

The second primary researcher is a fifty-seven year old Cherokee/Choctaw male professor in psychology. He has participated in approximately 425 sweat purification ceremonies and hundreds of other American Indian ceremonies and

dances throughout his life. This primary researcher appears to have American Indian heritage visually. His lived experiences are that of an American Indian, as he has directly experienced what it is like to exist as a person of color. This likely allowed him to gain the trust of the participants in a way a Non-American Indian would not have been able to. However, this researcher likely has a more subjective view of the research data than a Non-American Indian.

The researchers attempted to use their subjectivity to their advantage to gather emic data, while also attempting to counter the possible negative impact of their subjectivity. Both of the primary researchers had participated in sweat purification ceremonies with some of the participants in this study and this likely allowed the researchers to gain knowledge that may not have been gained if the researchers did not have this prior acquaintance.

While the researchers may have been influenced by previous interactions with participants, encounters with sweat purification ceremonies, and their own beliefs about American Indian traditions and tribal feminism, they attempted to compensate for any biases by, having both researchers attend focus groups and by using member checks to clarify data collected and the themes developed.

Appendix C: Figures



Figure 1. Medicine wheel.

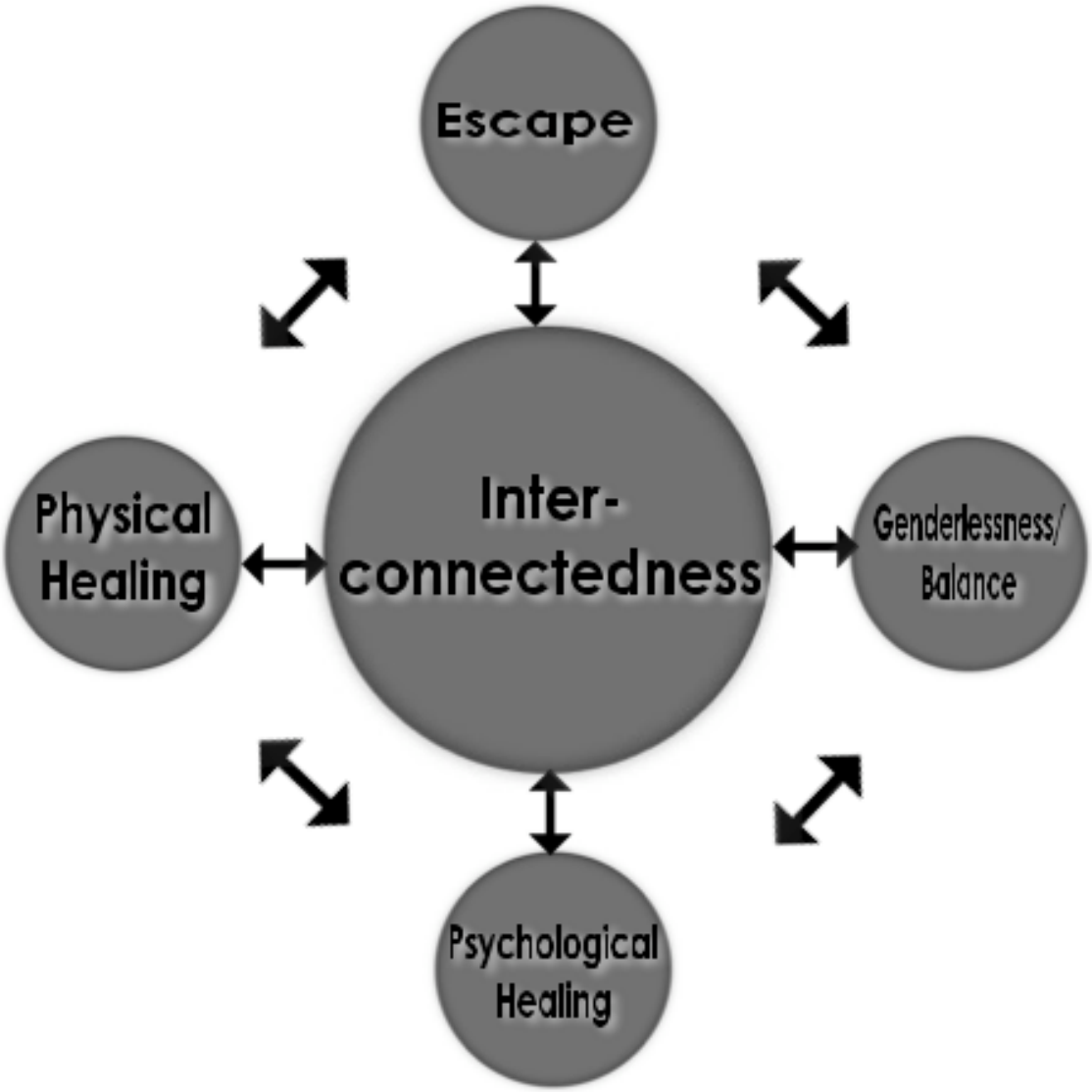


Figure 2. Model of themes.

Appendix D: **Demographic Information Form**

Age: _____

Gender:_____

Race/Ethnicity:_____

Education Level:_____

What is your primary
language?_____

How many sweat purification ceremonies (sweat lodge ceremonies) have you attended in your lifetime? _____

Years since 1st sweat ceremony _____

With what types of sweat ceremonies do you attend the most? (pick one)
-Tribal/Cultural
-General Sweat Ceremonies
-Other_____

How do you identify religiously/spiritually/culturally? Explain if necessary.
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix E: **Protocol**

For the purposes of this interview we will refer to Sweat Purification Ceremonies as "Sweats."

1. Tell me a little about how you got involved in participating in sweats.
    a. How long ago was your first sweat?
    b. How many sweats have you participated in?
    c. Why did you start going to sweats?
    d. Do you still attend sweats and if so why?

2. How do you conceptualize your experience with participating in sweats? (ie. spiritual, cultural, educational etc.)

3. Does you gender impact what role you take in your participation in sweats?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. What are your thoughts/feelings on this?

4. Does being a woman/man impact your experience with sweats?
    a. Why or why not?

5. Do you perceive your experience with sweats as different from the experience of men?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. What are your thoughts/feelings on this?

6. Have you participated in any other spiritual activities?
    a. What are these?
    b. How are these different from your experience with sweats?

7. With regards to being a woman/man how does your experience with sweats differ from your experience with other spiritual activities?
    a. Which do you prefer and why?

If participants have discussed Western forms of spirituality the following questions will be asked?

8. How Western forms of spirituality different from your experience with Sweats?

9. How are Western forms of spirituality the same as your experience with Sweats?

10. Does being a woman/man impact your experience with Western forms of spirituality differently from your experience with Sweats?

a. Why or why not?
b. What are your thoughts/feelings on this?

11. With regards to gender does anyone have anything else they would like to say about their experience with Sweats?