

5-2021

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS AND MENTAL HEALTH: CULTURE VS MODERN MEDICINE

Willis Dean Torres Jr.
California State University - San Bernardino

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Torres, Willis Dean Jr., "NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS AND MENTAL HEALTH: CULTURE VS MODERN MEDICINE" (2021). *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*. 1183.
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/1183>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS AND MENTAL HEALTH:
CULTURE VS MODERN MEDICINE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Willis Torres Jr.

May 2021

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS AND MENTAL HEALTH:
CULTURE VS MODERN MEDICINE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Willis Torres Jr.
May 2021

Approved by:

Thomas Davis, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work

Armando Barragán, M.S.W. Research Coordinator

© 2021 Willis Torres Jr.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine that, when it comes to mental health, are Native American veterans more inclined to utilize their cultural practices, or seek out modern Western medicine practices to attain mental wellness. The significance behind this research is to help future social workers and social service agencies better understand that perhaps when it comes to Native American veterans' cultural practices should be taken into consideration when helping to try to attain mental wellness. The study will include interviews conducted with Native American veterans. The data will help to determine which types of practices are better suited for each interviewee. Using the various themes within each interview will help decide which methods are more common amongst the participants.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the participants of this study and their valuable comments on this study and for their valiant service in the United States military.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM FORMULATION	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Cultural Practices.....	5
Veteran Agencies	6
Studies Focusing on Native American Veterans.....	7
Theories Guiding Conceptualization	8
CHAPTER THREE: PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON DESIGN.....	10
Introduction	10
Study Design	10
Sampling.....	11
Data Collection and Instruments.....	12
Procedures	13
Protection of Human Subjects	13
Data Analysis.....	14
Summary	14
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....	15
Findings	15
Demographics.....	15
Military Agency	16

Culture	18
Family	20
Spirituality	22
Summary	23
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	24
Introduction	24
APPENDIX A: RESEARCH FLYER.....	35
APPENDIX B: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	37
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	39
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT	41
APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER	43
REFERENCES	46

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Direct Quote Regarding a Military Agency	17
Table 2. Direct Quote Regarding Culture	19
Table 3. Direct Quote Regarding Family	21
Table 4. Direct Quote Regarding Spirituality	22

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM FORMULATION

In May of 2020, the Department of Veterans Affairs issued a report using data from 2017 regarding Native American veterans (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020). The report showed that in 2017 the number of Native American veterans in the United States was 158,217, and of that number, only 65,749 (or about 40%) used at least one type of Veterans Affairs' service or benefit. Furthermore, the report also showed Native American veterans were the least likely to utilize any benefits or services administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020). Native Americans have played a part in almost every American war, beginning with the Civil War, where the Cherokee tribe had the most tribal members involved (Connole, 2011). Native American tribes have always revered their warriors and often placed them in good standings within each tribe. This type of pride and respect within each tribe may be why there is such a high enlistment rate into the United States military amongst Native Americans. (Kaufmann, Richardson, Floyd, & Shore, 2014). However, those high numbers of Native Americans enlisting into military service are not the same numbers of Native veterans receiving mental health services from state or federal agencies like the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Veterans exiting from the military may have endured dangerous situations that may have had a traumatic effect on them. One study conducted with the

American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project noted that amongst veterans of the Southwest and Northern Plains that males showed between 22% and 25% of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, which were higher percentages when compared to Caucasian men (10%) (Goss et al., 2017). The main focus of any veteran returning home from war should be whether or not they have been diagnosed with PTSD, and if so, how are agencies like the VA helping those veterans to prevent harmful comorbidities like substance abuse or even suicide (O'Donnell, Logan, Bossarte, 2019). The services provided by the VA and veteran organizations can include group therapy and individual therapy. (Kracen et al., 2013). These services can be therapeutic for veterans who have access to the VA or other veteran organizations. For some Native American veterans, various barriers may prevent them from seeking out mental health services. Some obstacles may include stigma, traveling distance, or services that may be unknown to Native American veterans. These obstacles often leave Native Americans and other ethnic minorities as the lowest population to receive mental health services (Spoont et al., 2015). Some agencies are an extension of the VA and are geared towards helping Native American veterans living in rural areas. One such agency is the Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR), who would go to these areas and try to bring the services to those Native American veterans to avoid having them travel long distances (Kaufmann, Richardson, Floyd, & Shore, 2014). These agencies are honest with their intentions;

however, Native Americans may be turning to their methods of practice when it comes to mental health.

Native Americans have always had to depend on their modes of healing, both physically and mentally. There are those tribes that turn to sweat lodges, cultural songs, or even peyote ceremonies, as means of helping a member overcome any physical or mental impairment. Each tribe has its way of administering its practice, and each tradition has its meaning in terms of healing. Cultural well-being for Native Americans includes such practices as participating in a sweat. A sweat takes place in a sweat lodge where it is said to help cleanse a person from physical/mental troubles and help move forward in a person's spiritual journey (Gard & Casino, 2006). Some Native American veterans are returning home to reservations or communities that may be too far from the nearest VA, so they have no choice but to turn to their traditional ways of healing. Various forms of social work have to include some level of understanding when it comes to cultural sensitivity. Native Americans have endured centuries of trauma, from genocide, forced relocation to boarding schools, where children were torn from their families and stripped of their identity (Evens-Campbell, 2008). These types of historical trauma may be why there are such low numbers of Native American veterans who choose not to seek help from a federal or state agency. When it comes to policy, some legislature will allow Native Americans to exercise their cultural practice at various federal agencies. One such policy is the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 has been established for

such access in places like prison settings (Brault, 2005) where Native Americans can practice things like participating in a sweat lodge. So, perhaps, when it comes to helping Native American veterans who are not turning to the federal, state, or local government for mental health services, one should look at their cultural modalities for mental health. This study seeks to determine where Native American veterans turn to for help when it comes to mental health. This study aims to understand which types of services are being utilized by Native American veterans. Whether from a modern-day approach using therapy, group therapy, or medication from state or federal veteran agencies or utilizing their cultural practices, and whether or not there is a difference between the modern and cultural approach. This type of understanding will help social workers better help Native American veterans in the future by seeking out resources that will assist modern-day practices and cultural practices. This study's research question is to determine if Native American veterans turn to modern medicine or cultural tradition when it comes to mental health.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Native Americans have a history of being at a disadvantage, yet they continue to join the US military. Various tribes have their reasons for why young men and women join the military. Some tribes say it is a cultural practice to enlist, and some would note it is a family tradition (O’Keefe, & Reger, 2017). For whichever reason why Native Americans join the military, they are honored by their people, and they continue such traditions to keep the story of the tribe alive. However, to keep those stories alive, Native Americans must ask for help from either the VA or cultural customs, or both, because without help with mental illness, there is a slight chance that comorbidities may ensue.

Cultural Practices

There is a myriad of cultural practices that Native Americans can turn to in times of trouble, cultural practices that give thanks, create balance and harmony, create, and most importantly, healing (Portman & Garrett, 2006). One of those practices is smudging. Smudging occurs when either cedar or sage is burned, and the smoke is thought to purify an individual of negative energy (Rybak & Decker-Fitts, 2009). Another cultural practice is storytelling. Storytelling plays a significant role in tribal communities and is used to maintain ceremonies, history and even provides a sense of identity for some (Rybak, & Decker-Fitts, 2009). In one area of Alaska, indigenous communities established a suicide prevention

method called 'gatekeeper training' where various forms of cultural practices, including storytelling, were vital to preventing suicides (Wexler, White, & Trainor, 2014). The most common healing practices among Native Americans would have to be music, whether, by a drum, gourd, or just singing music amongst Native Americans holds spiritual traditions and are thought to be very therapeutic (Rybak, & Decker-Fitts, 2009). Many tribes across the US revere their veterans. In some cultural practices and ceremonies, veterans are at the forefront of those ceremonies, and if there were no veterans, that ceremony could not be practiced (Ward, Cope, Lindsey, 2017, p. 889).

Veteran Agencies

Although Native American veterans make up the lowest numbers when it comes to attaining VA services than other races, there has been a recent increase in those numbers. In 2005, Native Americans who attained VA services was 28.9%, and as of 2017, the number increased to 41.6% (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020). Veteran agencies are aware of the obstacles that some Native Americans have when it comes to attaining help. In 2001, the VA collaborated with various tribes to develop the Tribal Veterans Representative (TVR) program (Goss, Richardson, & Shore, 2019). The TVR program seeks to train individuals to take on the responsibilities of how to help those Native American veterans who are living in rural areas, lack transportation, or do not know how to attain services through the VA. The TVR representative will help veterans attain benefits (Goss, Richardson, & Shore, 2019).

Additionally, in 2002 the VA has established the American Indian Telemental Health (AITMH) program geared toward servicing Native Americans who may live in rural areas by using video conferencing (Goss et al., 2017). AITMH clinicians meet with their clients and are still able to prescribe medication and various forms of therapy. (Goss et al., 2017). These types of programs dedicated to the well-being of Native American veterans are, perhaps, why there was an increase in Native Americans seeking services from the VA.

Studies Focusing on Native American Veterans

There are currently 560 federally recognized tribes in the US, and of those tribes, there are over four million that identify as Native American (Bassette, Tsosie, & Nannauck, 2012). Tribes often live on executive-ordered reservations that may be located in rural areas. When it comes to cultural practices, one study conducted that showed out of one group of urban Native Americans, 38% of them sought help from a cultural leader, another study with a different group of urban Natives showed 70% sought out guidance from a cultural leader (Bassette, Tsosie, & Nannauck, 2012). One study suggests that Native American veterans did not receive a warm welcome home from US citizens during the Vietnam war. However, they were welcomed home with open arms from their communities or reservations (Ward, Cope, Lindsey, 2017).

Furthermore, this same previously mentioned study conducted a focus group where group members described their return home from Vietnam, one participant compared service members returning home welcomed with open

arms. Still, in previous wars, service members were spat on (Ward, Cope, & Lindsey, 2017). Additionally, another member of this same study stated that VA fell short of what was needed by returning veterans. The lack of resources caused some veterans to lose faith in the government (Ward, Cope, & Lindsey, 2017). The lack of support could often be the case as to why some older native veterans are not seeking the help they need when it comes to mental health. Those who take active steps to try to attain services from veteran agencies have been disappointed when they did not have the necessary paperwork or the agency had lost important documents (Ward, Cope, & Lindsey, 2017). Agency errors like these make any veteran not want to seek services and are left to seek medical and mental health services elsewhere. Transitioning back to civilian life from the military can be an uncomfortable experience for veterans, especially if they return from a warzone.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The theory to be used as part of this study's conceptualization will be the grounded theory model. As defined by Noble and Mitchell (2016), the grounded theory model is a research approach that is “grounded” in the information utilized to determine various outcomes within specific groups. This study would be the outcomes of Native American veterans utilizing cultural or modern practices to bring about mental wellness. Grounded theory can be applied to either quantitative or qualitative studies and be used to develop theories (Nobel & Mitchell, 2016). As intended, with this study being a qualitative study, the data

may be from conducting interviews and observations. Through these methods, the researcher would be able to observe through data analysis. These various themes might arise from the interviews or comments. Once a theme or pattern is established, it can help determine which form of mental wellness a Native American veteran would prefer, cultural practices or modern practices.

CHAPTER THREE

PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON DESIGN

Introduction

A thorough study regarding therapeutic practices amongst Native American veterans is examined. This chapter will cover what type of research study is being presented, the type of participants, and how the data was gathered and processed. This chapter also discusses how the participants were chosen and how the sampling procedures were utilized. Additionally, the participant pre-interview questionnaire and interview guide are discussed in this chapter. Lastly, data analysis is examined and how the information for the data is adequate for this study.

This study's premise expects to find valuable perspectives among Native American veterans regarding mental health and how cultural practices and Western medicine play a part in attaining mental wellness. This research hopes to determine whether Native American veterans utilize their cultural practices to attain mental wellness or turn to veteran organizations to provide modern forms of treatment, i.e., therapy, group therapy, or even medication.

Study Design

Qualitative research is meant to discuss the data collected to establish new questions and possible new approaches. Since there is a lack of research regarding this topic, the study will be considered an exploratory study. The

researcher seeks to utilize a new approach to understand whether Native American veterans practice culturally identified forms of healing regarding mental health or modern-day treatments. The research is meant to be utilized for future practitioners who seek to understand various forms of mental health interventions amongst Native American veterans. The participants of this study underwent qualitative interviews in order for each participant to provide their personal opinions to be considered and recorded. One study limitation may include limited participants willing to be part of the interview process or participants who may not be comfortable with the research. Additionally, there may be an uneasy feeling of divulging any information that a participant may feel is too personal. Participants may also not have a solid cultural background, or they may not have had a positive experience while serving in the military.

Sampling

The type of samples utilized in this research are human subjects who were interviewed using a digital application over a computer (due to COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions). The initial goal was to attain at least ten individuals to partake in the study. However, only seven were available to participate in the study. Some participants were recruited by word of mouth, and other participants reached out to the research after coming in contact with the research flyer (Appendix A). There were three criteria that participants had to meet to be a participant in the research project: they had to be 18 years or older, be a veteran of the United States military, and be a descendant or enrolled member of a state

or federally recognized tribe. This type of criteria was the ideal sample for this study because it allowed a broad range of participants to participate in the research. Additionally, the criteria did not limit participation by setting strict guidelines for only federally recognized tribes or, in terms of military service, not discounting prior active-duty military versus reservists.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data was attained using a qualitative method approach through individual interviews, beginning January and ending February 2021. The interviews were conducted using a computer application, Zoom. The interviews were recorded and saved to the researchers' personal computer using a built-in computer application QuickTime Player. The individuals who participated in the study were notified before the interview of what the interview entails, such as, any potential risks, why the interview were recorded, and all information will remain confidential. Before beginning the interview, a pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix A) was completed to gather items like the military branch of service, years of service, combat deployments, tribal affiliation, and veteran agency affiliation. The interview guide (Appendix B) seeks to address the following questions in this qualitative study: what are some types of cultural practices that have helped you attain mental wellness? What are some reasons why a Native American veteran would choose modern practices over cultural practices when it comes to mental health? Are Native Americans utilizing cultural practices more than conventional practices, or vice versa, or is it a combination

of both? The proper precautions and risks were addressed and discussed with the participant before the interview began. Participants were informed of the type of study they would be partaking in before signing the informed consent form, should they choose not to participate.

Procedures

Certain Native American veteran agencies were emailed to attain the target population. However, there was no response from any agency. The researcher sought participants through word of mouth and through the use of a research flyer (Appendix A) that was posted on various social media platforms, which is how participants became aware and agreed to participate in the research interview. All interviews were conducted using the video conference application, Zoom. The interviews were recorded using a built-in computer application (QuickTime Player) and at no time was any interview saved to the application Zoom.

Protection of Human Subjects

All participants reviewed and signed an informed consent document informing them that all personal identifying information will be completely confidential and stored in a secure lockbox. Any digital data will be stored on an encrypted USB drive in a locked desk. A transcribing service, Temi, was used to transcribe the audio from each interview into a transcript. Documents did not require participants to disclose personal information such as home address,

telephone numbers, or social security numbers. After a year of the completion of this study, all data will be deleted and destroyed.

Data Analysis

The interview data was transcribed into paper documents. The transcripts were reviewed and processed, and initial thoughts were noted regarding the transcripts. The researcher then started indexing the transcripts and noting any patterns in sentences, opinions, or any other relevant information. Next, categories were established that showed which information was deemed necessary based on the indexing pattern. Once all the information had been indexed, all pertinent data related to the study was presented.

Summary

The research study method was geared towards making both the researcher and the participant comfortable with the study and the research goal, which is to determine which mode of mental wellness most appeals to the participant: cultural practices or western medicine. The participant determined the setting, date, and time to put them at ease. Additionally, the participants were given the option to have the interview conducted over the phone or using a virtual platform. After each interview, the participants were reminded that all identifying information would remain under the strictest of confidence. All precautions were taken, and all data was utilized to attain a successful study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Findings

After interviewing the 7 Native American veterans about their types of mental health practices, there were some interesting subjects and themes that were revealed. Since there are a variety of mental health applications with either western practices or indigenous practices, as the research has shown, this study sought to determine which practice was most common amongst the veterans being interviewed. This chapter provides the findings in short narratives in the following categories: culture, family, military agencies, and spirituality. These categories will be referred to hereon after as individual practices. The interviewee demographics are presented first, followed by individual quotes from each participant regarding each category.

Demographics

The interviews were comprised of 7 adult male veterans, 4 served in the US Marine Corps, 1 in the US Navy, 1 in the US Army, and 1 in the US Air Force. Of the 7 participants, each identified with their own respective tribes which included, Pala Band of Mission Indians, the Three Affiliated Tribes (Arikara), Diné, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, Sioux, Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, and the Payuches. The years of service among the veterans ranged from 2 years to 32 years. There were a few veteran agencies associated

by each veteran, which included the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Native American Veteran Association, the Semper Fi Fund, Golden State Board Society, and the American Indian Veterans Association of Southern California.

Thematic analysis (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017) was used accordingly after each transcription of the seven interviews. Utilizing thematic analysis established common trends and themes that were more easily distinguished in each interview. These common trends and themes were analyzed to determine vital information regarding mental health practices amongst Native American veterans and whether they sought cultural practices or modern-day practices.

Military Agency

Another main theme amongst the participants was a “military agency” and how an agency (or agencies), at some point or another, played a part in their lives whether it was negative or positive. The military agencies discussed by the interviewees ranged from federal agencies like the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as non-profits like the Semper Fi Fund. One agency was actually established by a participant, the Native American Veterans Association.

Table 1. Direct Quote Regarding a Military Agency

Participant #	Direct Quote Regarding Military Agency
1	“Yes. I just started going to them [Veterans Affairs Hospital] ...for medical purposes.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
2	“Yeah, I guess the Semper Fi Fund. You can write that. If you don’t know about them, they’re amazing.” “they help veterans that are combat veterans who are disabled. They’ve helped me out so much over the years, just a month and a half ago, with my HVAC system. So, it controls my central AC and the heat in my house went out and the compressor unit outside and they spent \$9,000.00 to repair it.” (Research Interview, January 2021)
2	“I do everything through the VA.” “And then for mental health, I used to go before quarantine and COVID, um, I used to go to the VA once a week for personal therapy, one-on-one therapy and then three different times I’ve gone for group therapy. They offer that as well.” “I’m a big champion of the VA actually...they have done a lot to take care of me and I would be sick and dying and riddled with mental health issues and dead by now, if it weren’t for the VA.” (Research Interview, January 2021)
3	“No, unfortunately, no. A couple years ago I did some volunteer work. It was Operation Stand Down and essentially it was in Compton, [California] and the purpose of that Stand Down was to give veterans information on different resources that were available to them.” (Research Interview, January 2021)
4	“I do, I go to the hospital with the VA, they have different programs, work out programs. I see a VA doctor. So, you know, I participate when I can.” (Research Interview, January 2021)
4	“I’m a member of the Golden State Gourd Society in California, it’s in California and when they asked me, they will ask a veteran to do different functions in our society, like, carry the flags, you know, or bring the flag up, you know, those kinds of things. So, they’ll have a veteran, and I participate in those ways too.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
5	“And we registered with UAI [United American Indian Involvement] and got counseling for him. I got counseling for them. And then, um, later on, I got invited to go experience powwows for the first time and experienced smudging.” (Research Interview, January 2021).

5	“some of the veterans had wanted to get together and start a native veteran’s organization [Native American Veterans Association]. And so, I went and originally there was four of us and we talked and kind of decided to go ahead and start the organization. We worked on the bylaws, and how we were going to perform, you know, how we were going to be organized. And then we submitted the paperwork, and we were originally a 501(c)(19) which is kind of like the American Legion, VFW, that type of organization.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
6	“Meaning like the VA? I was but not anymore.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
6	“I’m with the Honor Guard down here, I guess you could say, the American Indian Veterans Association of Southern California, Honor Guard.” “That’s what keeps them going. And for a lot of them, you know, they don’t really say too much. A lot of especially older men. But for them, you know, it comes out often that, you know, they’ll say ‘if I wasn’t doing this, I wouldn’t be doing anything’.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
7	“Actually, it’s been a year since I seen a doctor there [VA], but prior to that it has been like seven years before. I don’t know, like five years since I seen a doctor there.” “I have better treatment using my health insurance [at the VA].” (Research Interview, January 2021).

Culture

One main theme amongst the interviewees was the topic of culture. Culture amongst each participant played a vital role in each of their lives, additionally, when culture is discussed it is often associated with a family member that either taught the participant the importance of the cultural practice, or the participant is teaching another family member the importance of their culture.

Table 2. Direct Quote Regarding Culture

Participant #	Direct Quote Regarding Culture
1	<p>“I have gone to, like ceremonies and powwows on the Native American side.” “Well, for us we have a, it’s a ceremony that we have, we gather around a fire and then, you know, we do prayers and the medicine man there is there, and he looks at things and tries to decipher what’s going on.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
2	<p>“Everything, dancing, praying, worshiping. My grandma taught me a lot about worshiping things and ideas. Right? So, a lot of that.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
3	<p>“So, it would be more ceremonial. We'll pray, sweet grass, Sage, yeah, it's just, if there's a time to reflect or to meditate or to pray, it usually involves those. I know it's kind of a cliché, but I think for Native Americans, the true meaning behind that, again, it's really powerful and sacred for the most part.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
4	<p>“So, but it's also good to know your own ways... You have different songs, different medicine, different traditions. And it's good to know those ways because that's your people, you have your own language. And a lot of our language is dying, you know, so we have to go back and learn those ways to keep it going. And it's good to see like yourself, you're native, you served our country, and you're going out and you are learning these things. So, you can pass this on to your children or to, to people your, of your nation, same thing with me, you know, like I teach my children our language, the best I can and some of the prayers that I've learned and some of our ways that I know, cause it's, Kituwah, that's me, that's who I am. And that's part of the healing.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
5	<p>“I think it [cultural influence] helped me because it made me feel better about who I was. Right. You know, and maybe more comfortable in myself.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
6	<p>“Definitely with the tradition of the white sage, you know, learning the respect that we have for it, and also with the tobacco, the way that we use it, that's what we were taught, you know, growing up, and try to stay away from, you know, also obviously drugs and stuff like that, but it was a big thing was the values, it was a smudging yourself, you know, occasionally you'd go in with the sweating. I think the biggest thing out here, for me, at least it was Bird Singing that kept</p>

	just kind of going as young kids, you know, and, and try to keep us on the right road the best possible way. And the elders did the best it could, you know, and they pass along. Luckily it passed along a lot of the songs and stuff, and that sparks your interest and that's what you kind of stayed with. And, you know, kind of kept me on that road as long as it could, you know?" (Research Interview, January 2021).
7	"I got tobacco and I got a pipe. Okay. And I got sage. And what I do is I, see I didn't know that I had a gift of healing and, but my mom hints it to me when I was younger than that, I had this gift. And so, I do a lot of smudging and blessings and prayers. I even went as far as like to Window Rock on the Navajo Nation. And I was asked to do a prayer there. And then when I was with, when I went back home to the Chemehuevi's, I went there for some ceremony and for uh and I was asked to do a blessing and then they also gave me a welcome home blessing. So, um, but now, like, you know, I, I use sage and I use tobacco and I might go someplace real far away and do those and do the meditation and do the four directions." (Research Interview, January 2021).

Family

Another theme amongst the Native American veterans was "family", who in some way connected the participant to their cultural identity, either before or after joining the military. Additionally, each participant credited each family members' influence on them as a positive influence.

Table 3. Direct Quote Regarding Family

Participant #	Direct Quote Regarding Family
1	<p>“I was raised with my mom who’s English. She was born in England and then I got married to my wife, who’s Navajo. And then that’s where more so the influence came in and then after, after and during the military, it’s more, I see more of the Natives side.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
2	<p>“Native American spirituality and my family taught me a bunch about it.” “Everything, dancing, praying, worshiping. My grandma taught me a lot about worshiping things and ideas. Right? So, a lot of that.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
3	<p>“the first time I was exposed to, well I’ll say our culture was when I was probably around seven or eight, my grandmother and my aunt, they took me from Omaha, Nebraska, and we drove all the way to White Shield, North Dakota because that’s my reservation. She exposed me to my first powwow...” “my grandma was probably the first influence, from that age, but between, I’d say from 8 till about 13-innercity.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
4	<p>“we got involved in powwows, my mom, you know, my brother and sister we all danced and sang. And that was a big influence in our lives.” “And since my family is from Oklahoma, we adapted to the Southern style, and when I was in the military, I met a lot of Northern friends, you know, like the Lakota, the different tribes from up North, the Cree, the Dakotas, different tribes. And I learned their songs and their ways, you know, and they become family, like Indian people we adopt each other’s ways and are like family to me. So, they brought me in.” (Research Interview, January 2021).</p>
5	<p>“because of that [cultural influence], I started researching and learning about my family members and doing like a family tree and stuff, you know, but this was really through like asking my grandparents asking my mom getting copies of like, well, this person was married to this person, and then married to this person. And I think I went back like two generations.” (Research Interview, January 2021)</p>
6	<p>“Talking with family, if I had a major issue or, you know, luckily, I’m fortunate enough to have both parents, you know, they stuck it out. So, a lot of it was, I guess, referring to native families, it’s traditionally talk with maybe aunts, uncles, parents. And so, they kind of like, you know, just give the best advice they could. And then establish that respect at an early</p>

	age to come to them when we did have issues or something like that.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
7	“My uncle Paul would tell me about the traditions of the Payuches and he would teach, tell me the stories of traditional teachings of the Payuches and how we got to the Western part of the United States.” “My Uncle was, he was the one that taught me that I was Native American.” (Research Interview, February 2021).

Spirituality

Under the theme of “spirituality”, the majority of participants attributed their cultural influences as a form of spirituality, also, the participants compared this form of spirituality to religious practices such as attending church. The way in which the interviewees discuss spirituality (as it pertains to cultural practices), it is discussed in a manner that conveys healing. Find direct quotes below regarding spirituality.

Table 4. Direct Quote Regarding Spirituality

Participant #	Direct Quote Regarding Spirituality
1	“If I felt like something was trying to attack me spiritually or something like that, I would try to go to the, um, the native side.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
2	“I was big into Native American spirituality and my family taught me a bunch about it. And, uh, also my other side of my family who was white really, uh, took me to church as a teenager. Um, and so I had Native American spirituality and Christianity.” (Research Interview, January 2021).

3	“Cultural approach...It’s kind of like, that’s our church, you know, like Westerners, that’s our church for, we get our spirituality and camaraderie.” (Research Interview, January 2021).
4	“that’s really part of our way too it’s the Cherokee ways are the Stomp dance. Yeah. It’s, uh, I guess the only way I can compare it to is like, um, church. Yeah. So, it’s, we have our different protocols and our different ways of doing things.” (Research Interview, January 2021).

Summary

The results of this study showed mixed results that showed that while all participants feel that culture practices are relevant in their day to day lives and play a vital part in their mental wellness, also more than half of the interviewees participated in some type of veteran agency that was also conducive to their lives. This may suggest that Native American veterans find mental wellness in practicing cultural ceremonies and customs, however, veteran agencies can be another component to mental wellness that offers Western medicine practices and camaraderie.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter delves into this study's findings through short descriptions, common themes that transpired from the study, culture, family, military agencies, and spirituality. Both the limitations and implications are explained in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter will address any future social work practices and research regarding Native American veterans.

The study provided similarities amongst the interviewees regardless of age, tribal affiliation, or branch of service. After a review of the data, several themes were similar among the Native American veterans. In this study, the term Native American veteran refers to an individual who identifies as a member of a federally, or state, recognized tribe who also served as a United States military member. All participants understood the advantages, and disadvantages, of being a Native American veteran and how it pertains to mental health, both culturally and socially. The title of both Native American and veteran played an essential role in the lives of each participant.

In this study participants, each described their own experiences with various military agencies. According to Russell & Russell (2018), one part of an individual's social identity can be attributed to group identification. Individuals can learn to associate with others within an identified group and are often regarded as having positive physical and mental health outcomes. One standard agency is

the Veterans Administration (VA). The majority of interviewees only described the VA as a place where they go for medical appointments. For example, participant 1 stated, “Yes. I just started going to them [VA Hospital] for medical purposes.” (Participant 1, January 2021). However, one participant described his gratitude for the VA because they were able to offer him multiple resources when it came to mental health.

Participant 2 states, And then for mental health, I used to go before quarantine and COVID, um, I used to go to the VA once a week for personal therapy, one-on-one therapy and then three different times I’ve gone for group therapy. They offer that as well. I’m a big champion of the VA actually...they have done a lot to take care of me and I would be sick and dying and riddled with mental health issues and dead by now, if it weren’t for the VA. (Participant 2, January 2021).

This sentence is important because it provides a glimpse into how a federal veteran agency can help Native American veterans access mental health resources. Furthermore, most participants belonged to other veteran agencies that were mainly associated with other Native American veterans. It has been interpreted that even though cultural practices are essential, there is a sense of pride in being a veteran that still brings the Native American veteran community together. For example, participant 6 stated, “I’m with the Honor Guard down here, I guess you could say, the American Indian Veterans Association of Southern California, Honor Guard.” (Participant 6, January 2021). Participant 6

went on to discuss how other members enjoyed being part of an agency, “That’s what keeps them going. And for a lot of them, you know, they don’t really say too much. A lot of especially older men. But for them, you know, it comes out often that, you know, they’ll say ‘if I wasn’t doing this, I wouldn’t be doing anything.’” (Participant 6, January 2021). It might suggest that Native American veteran agencies bring together two significant aspects of the participants' lives, culture, and military service.

One participant explains how he and a few of his comrades established their own Native American veteran agency.

Participant 5 states, some of the veterans had wanted to get together and start a native veteran’s organization [Native American Veterans Association]. And so, I went and originally there was four of us and we talked and kind of decided to go ahead and start the organization. We worked on the bylaws, and how we were going to perform, you know, how we were going to be organized. And then we submitted the paperwork, and we were originally a 501(c)(19) which is kind of like the American Legion, VFW, that type of organization. (Participant 5, January 2021).

This information might imply that Native American veterans enjoy being in the company of other Native American veterans to share a sense of pride and familiarity and participate in various cultural practices and military traditions that could be considered beneficial for their mental health.

In this study, culture is explained as beliefs, customs, and practices associated with a particular population, which in this study refers to indigenous populations. This population (Native Americans) becomes a tribe that an individual is born into and is accepted as a member. Some of the participants will also refer to specific cultural practices as ceremonies, for example participant 3 states,

So, it would be more ceremonial. We'll pray, sweet grass, sage, yeah, it's just, if there's a time to reflect or to meditate or to pray, it usually involves those. I know it's kind of a cliché, but I think for Native Americans, the true meaning behind that, again, it's really powerful and sacred for the most part. (Participant 3, January 2021).

This sentence is important because it could indicate that such cultural ceremonies are practiced in order to attain mental wellness. Participants shared a wealth of information and knowledge regarding their respective cultural customs and practices and acknowledged the importance of utilizing them for therapeutic purposes. For example, participant 6 stated,

Definitely with the tradition of the white sage, you know, learning the respect that we have for it, and also with the tobacco, the way that we use it, that's what we were taught, you know, growing up, and try to stay away from, you know, also obviously drugs and stuff like that, but it was a big thing was the values, it was a smudging yourself, you know, occasionally you'd go in with the sweating. I think the biggest thing out here, for me, at

least it was Bird Singing that kept just kind of going as young kids, you know, and, and try to keep us on the right road the best possible way. And the elders did the best it could, you know, and they pass along. Luckily it passed along a lot of the songs and stuff, and that sparks your interest and that's what you kind of stayed with. And, you know, kind of kept me on that road as long as it could, you know? (Participant 6, January 2021).

In this study, each participant spoke about culture as a part of their own identity and the importance of knowing both. One example given by participant 5 who stated, "I think it [cultural influence] helped me because it made me feel better about who I was. Right. You know, and maybe more comfortable in myself." (Participant 5, January 2021). It might suggest that this sense of identity is derived from cultural practices, and it is these cultural ceremonies that invoke healing, both mentally and physically. Furthermore, there is an insight into how some cultural ceremonies are facilitated by medicine men who offer guidance to Native Americans. Participant 1 explains "Well, for us we have a, it's a ceremony that we have, we gather around a fire and then, you know, we do prayers and the medicine man there is there, and he looks at things and tries to decipher what's going on." (Participant 1, January 2021). Another contribution to this study is understanding how cultural practices can be used for healing purposes, not just for the participants to receive but also for participants to offer to others.

For example, participant 7 explains, I got tobacco and I got a pipe. Okay. And I got sage. And what I do is I, see I didn't know that I had a gift of

healing and, but my mom hints it to me when I was younger than that, I had this gift. And so, I do a lot of smudging and blessings and prayers. I even went as far as like to Window Rock on the Navajo Nation. And I was asked to do a prayer there. And then when I was with, when I went back home to the Chemehuevi's, I went there for some ceremony and for uh and I was asked to do a blessing and then they also gave me a welcome home blessing. So, um, but now, like, you know, I, I use sage and I use tobacco and I might go someplace real far away and do those and do the meditation and do the four directions. (Participant 7, January 2021).

This sentence is vital because the participant provides insight regarding his mother introducing him to cultural aspects of himself. Also, the sentence introduces how family members play an essential role amongst Native American veterans. It also shows a correlation between culture and mental health. Another contribution to this study is how family members played a significant role in each participant's lives, especially when it came to cultural influences. Family is often described as parents, aunts, uncles, or tribal elders who play an integral piece that shapes how the participant views cultural practices.

For example, one participant stated, Talking with family, if I had a major issue or, you know, luckily, I'm fortunate enough to have both parents, you know, they stuck it out. So, a lot of it was, I guess, referring to native families, it's traditionally talk with maybe aunts, uncles, parents. And so, they kind of like, you know, just give the best advice they could. And then

establish that respect at an early age to come to them when we did have issues or something like that.” (Participant 6, 2021).

Also, family members are described as the first to expose each participant to cultural practices. For example, participant 3 states, “the first time I was exposed to, well I’ll say our culture was when I was probably around seven or eight, my grandmother and my aunt, they took me from Omaha, Nebraska, and we drove all the way to White Shield, North Dakota because that’s my reservation. She exposed me to my first powwow...” (Participant 3, January 2021). Also, family members may include spouses who play an integral role for cultural integration. For example, one participant mentions, “I was raised with my mom who’s English. She was born in England and then I got married to my wife, who’s Navajo. And then that’s where more so the influence came in and then after, after and during the military, it’s more, I see more of the Native side.” (Participant 1, January 2021). It might suggest that after exiting the military, and veterans return to their families and communities, they are reintroduced to their cultural practices as a way of healing. Family can also be described as other tribes who have accepted other tribal members as their own.

Participant 4 states, we got involved in powwows, my mom, you know, my brother and sister we all danced and sang. And that was a big influence in our lives.” “And since my family is from Oklahoma, we adapted to the Southern style, and when I was in the military, I met a lot of Northern friends, you know, like the Lakota, the different tribes from up North, the

Cree, the Dakotas, different tribes. And I learned their songs and their ways, you know, and they become family, like Indian people we adopt each other's ways and are like family to me. So, they brought me in. (Participant 4, January 2021).

This sentence is important because it is the key to understanding how Native American veterans place significance on cultural practices and how this participant could develop familial relationships with other Native Americans while on active duty. Cultural influence, conversely, motivated one participant to learn more about his family history. It might suggest that the more participants knew about their culture, the more they were encouraged to learn about their family, and vice versa.

For example, participant 5 states, because of that [cultural influence], I started researching and learning about my family members and doing like a family tree and stuff, you know, but this was really through like asking my grandparents asking my mom getting copies of like, well, this person was married to this person, and then married to this person. And I think I went back like two generations. (Participant 5, January 2021).

Participants in this study compared cultural practices as a form of spirituality, a type of spirituality referred to as traditional medicine, and a form of spirituality that is compared to Christianity. One study showed that veterans who participated in various states of spirituality and religious practices showed a

decrease in mental illness symptoms (Sharma et al., 2017). Participant 2 explains how he was exposed to both cultural and religious practices as a child, ““I was big into Native American spirituality and my family taught me a bunch about it. And, uh, also my other side of my family who was white really, uh, took me to church as a teenager. Um, and so I had Native American spirituality and Christianity.” (Participant 2, January 2021). Also, there were examples given of when a participant knew when to engage in a cultural ceremony. Participant 1 states, “If I felt like something was trying to attack me spiritually or something like that, I would try to go to the, um, the native side.” This sentence is important because it is the key to understanding why some of the participants turn to cultural practices. Also, this type of cultural spirituality is compared to Christian spirituality by participants throughout the study.

For example, participant 4 states, that’s really part of our way too it’s the Cherokee ways are the Stomp dance. Yeah. It’s, uh, I guess the only way I can compare it to is like, um, church. Yeah. So, it’s, we have our different protocols and our different ways of doing things. (Participant 4, January 2021).

It has been interpreted that for Native American veterans to come together and partake in cultural practices has a spiritual and unifying effect on their community. For example, participant 3 expressed his take on cultural practices, “Cultural approach...It’s kind of like, that’s our church, you know, like Westerners,

that's our church for, we get our spirituality and camaraderie." (Participant 3, January 2021).

The qualitative data of the study, upon analysis, determined that the participants found comfort in utilizing their cultural practices when it came to mental health. Further research shows that the participants would still use federal and non-profit veteran agencies for medical purposes and mental health purposes. Additionally, it has been interpreted that the participants found solace in Native American veteran organizations, where they can engage with other Native veterans about their service in the military and their cultural customs and practices. Lastly, each veteran proudly shared the importance of knowing one's cultural traditions. The value of learning those practices from either family members or tribal elders and teaching them to younger generations is in and of itself a form of healing.

For example, participant 4 states, So, but it's also good to know your own ways... You have different songs, different medicine, different traditions. And it's good to know those ways because that's your people, you have your own language. And a lot of our language is dying, you know, so we have to go back and learn those ways to keep it going. And it's good to see like yourself, you're native, you served our country, and you're going out and you are learning these things. So, you can pass this on to your children or to, to people your, of your nation, same thing with me, you know, like I teach my children our language, the best I can and some of

the prayers that I've learned and some of our ways that I know, cause it's, Kituwah, that's me, that's who I am. And that's part of the healing.

(Participant 4, January 2021).

APPENDIX A
RESEARCH FLYER

Participants Needed for a Research Study Regarding Native American Veterans and Mental Health

Research Details:

The purpose of this research seeks to determine whether Native American Veterans are more inclined to seek mental health services utilizing cultural practices, Western medicine practices, or both.

Participant Qualifications:

- 18 years or older.
- Must be a veteran of the United States Military.
- Must be a descendant or enrolled member of a State or Federally recognized tribe

Participation Involves:

- 30-minute interviews conducted utilizing a virtual platform (Zoom, GoToMeeting, Facetime, etc.)

For any questions regarding this study please contact Will Torres at torrw301@coyote.csusb.edu.

This study has been approved by the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B
PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender: 1. Male 2. Female

Branch of Service: 1. Air Force 2. Army 3. Navy 4. Marines 5. Coast Guard

Years of Service: _____

Deployments: 1. Korean War 2. Vietnam War 3. Gulf War 4. OEF 5. OIF 6. Other: _____

Tribal Affiliations: _____

Agency Affiliations: (VA, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Wounded Warrior, etc)

Developed by Willis Torres Jr.

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

1. Prior to joining the military and when dealing with issues like stress, anxiety, or even depression, what are some coping strategies, if any, do you turn to? (i.e. meditation, exercising, reading, etc.).
2. Were there any cultural influences in your life prior to joining the military? Are there cultural aspects of your life currently? If so, what were/are they?
3. Are there any veteran agencies that you currently are involved with? If so which ones?
4. Currently, when dealing with issues such as stress do you find yourself wanting to turn to cultural practices or modern-day practices? Or both?
5. What are some of the coping strategies that you use? Either cultural or modern-day practices.

Developed by Willis Torres Jr.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine whether Native American veterans are more likely to utilize modern day practices or cultural practices when it comes to attaining mental wellness. The study is being conducted by Willis Torres Jr., a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Armando Barragán, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to determine whether Native American veterans are utilizing cultural practices or modern western practices when it comes to mental health.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked of a few questions regarding their military background, tribal affiliation, cultural practices, and any modern therapeutic practices.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your responses will remain confidential and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey.

RISKS: Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end your participation.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Thomas Davis at (909) 537- 3501.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database.

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



January 11, 2021

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Administrative/Exempt Review Determination
Status: Determined Exempt
IRB-FY2021-104

Thomas Davis Willis Torres
CSBS - Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Thomas Davis Willis Torres:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Native American Veterans and Mental Health: Culture vs Modern Medicine" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. Important Note: This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Office of Academic Research website for more information at <https://www.csusb.edu/academic-research>.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2021-104 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dabbs

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

ND/MG

REFERENCES

- Bassette, D., Tsosie, U., & Nannauck, S. (2012). Our culture is medicine: perspectives of native healers on posttrauma recovery among American Indian and Alaska Native patients. *The Permanente Journal*, 16(1), 19-27.
- Brault, E. (2008). Sweating in the joint; personal and cultural renewal and healing through sweat lodge practice by Native Americans in prison. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/docview/305404026?pq-origsite=primo>
- Connole, J. (2011) Why they fought: Native American involvement in the American Civil War. *Whispering Wind*, 39(6). 12-16.
- Department of Veterans Affairs. (2020). American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans: 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/AIAN.pdf>
- Evens-Campbell, T. (2008). Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities: a multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(3), 316-338.
- Gard, J., & Casino, Vincent Del. (2006). Creating Health in a Native American Sweat Lodge: The Production of an Alternative Healing Space. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/docview/304909692?accountid=10359>

- Goss, C., Richardson, W., Dailey, N., Byron, B., Nagamoto, H., Manson, S., Shore, J., (2017). Rural American Indian and Alaska native veterans' telemental health: a model of culturally centered care. *Psychological Services, 14*(3), 270-278.
- Goss, C.W., Richardson, W.J., & Shore, J.H. (2019). Outcomes and lessons learned from the tribal Veterans representative program: a model for system engagement. *Journal of Community Health, 44*, 1076-1085.
- Indian Health Service (n.d.) Health Program Profile. Retrieved from <https://www.ihs.gov/california/index.cfm/health-programs/southern-california/rsbcih/>
- Kaufmann, J., Richardson, J., Floyd, J., Shore, J. (2014) Tribal veteran representative (TVR) training program; the effect of community outreach workers on American Indian and Alaska native veterans access to the utilization of the veterans health administration. *J Community Health, 39*, 990-996.
- Kracen, A., Mastnak, J., Loaiza, K., Matthieu, M., (2013). Group therapy among oef/oif/ veterans: treatment barriers and preferences. *Military Medicine, 178*. E146-e149.
- Noble, H., & Mitchell, G. (2016). What is grounded theory? *Evidence Based Nursing, 19*(2), 34-35.
- Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D., & Moules, N. (2017). Thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1).

- O'Donnell, J., Logan, J., Bossarte, R. (2019). Ten-year trend and correlates of reported posttraumatic stress disorder among young male veteran suicide decedents-results from the national violent death reporting system, 16 U.S. states, 2005-2014. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 49*(5), 1473-1478.
- Portman, T.A., & Garrett, M.T. (2006). Native American healing traditions. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 53*(4), 453-469. DOI: 10.1080/10349120601008647.
- Russell, C., & Russell, D. (2018). It's not just showing up: How social identification with a veterans service organization relates to benefit-finding and social isolation among veterans. *Psychological Services, 15*(2), 154–162.
- Rybak, C., & Decker-Fitts, A. (2009). Theory and practice: understanding Native American healing practices. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 16*(3), 333-342. DOI: 10.1080/09515070903270900.
- Sharma, V., Marin, D., Koenig, H., Feder, A., Iacoviello, B., Southwick S., & Pietrzak, R. (2017). Religion, spirituality, and mental health of U.S. military veterans: Results from the national health and resilience in veterans study. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 217*, 197–204.
- Spoont, M., Nelson, D., Murdoch, M., Sayer, N., Nugent, S., Rector, T., Westermeyer, J. (2015). Are there racial/ethnic disparities in va ptsd treatment retention? *Depression and Anxiety, 32*, 415-425.

Wexler, L., White, J., & Trainor, B. (2014). Research Paper: why an alternative to suicide prevention gatekeeper training is needed for rural Indigenous communities: presenting an empowering community storytelling approach. *Critical Public Health*, 25(2), 205-217. DOI: 10.1080/09581596.2014.904039.