

Evaluating the Oneida Men's Domestic Violence Program

Lea Padron

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the Oneida men's Domestic Violence program and assess, from the male point of view, what was effective in helping them complete the program and not reoffend. It is important for professionals working with Native American clients to know if including a cultural component in a domestic violence program is a key factor in helping men in their healing process. This issue is important to social work because there are cultural factors imbedded in the healing experiences of men who are abusers, and it is important to look at them from the client's perspective. Also, by understanding these cultural factors, organizations could develop similar new programs and approaches when working with this population.

The research study asked; what impact does a domestic violence program have in a male's healing experience? What works well for male participants in their healing experience in a domestic violence program? Do cultural components play a role in the successful program elements? Six men who were former program participants agreed to be interviewed for this study. The results found, there were four themes the interview participants identified from as helpful for them in the healing and not re-abusing: (1) what worked well, (2) facilitator, (3) program impact and (4) cultural components.

## Introduction

Currently, there is little research examining domestic violence among Native Americans, and even less research is done on specific tribes. This research study looked at the Oneida men's Domestic Violence program and assessed, from the male point of view, what was effective in helping them complete the program and not reoffend. It is important for professionals working with Native American clients to know if including a culture component in a domestic violence program is a key factor in helping men in their healing process. This issue is important to social work because there are cultural factors imbedded in the healing experiences of men who are abusers, and it is important to assess them from the client's perspective. Also, by understanding their cultural factors, organizations could develop similar new programs and approaches when working with this population.

## Literature Review

Literature discussing domestic violence among Native Americans is limited, and materials specifically discussing Native men as abusers is even scarcer. This became a barrier, but also became motivation, for researching this topic. Even though the literature was limited, some did stress the importance of creating services to fit the needs of First Nations people. This argument is affirmed by Weaver (2005) when she writes,

Culturally competent interventions with Native Americans clients should incorporate the use of containment skills such as listening, patience, and silence. The needs of clients should guide the work rather than rather than the social worker's preference for particular models or methods. Respect for culturally based beliefs, values and behaviors must also be an integral part of choosing and implementing interventions (pg. 99).

In a research study done on Native American professionals, looking at what they believe cultural competence incorporates, Weaver (2004) writes, "Cultural competence involves not only recognizing a client's culture and its influence on the helping process, but also being able to provide culturally congruent services" (pg. 21). In the same study Weaver later writes, "One of the most striking similarities across professions is the agreement on the areas of knowledge necessary for cultural competence with Native Americans. Professionals from all categories identified culture, diversity, and history as important things to understand" (pg. 31).

In another article Buchwald and his colleagues write about the importance of including traditional ways of healing for Native people to restore balance, "Indigenous ways of doing things are often still vital and practical. Traditional healing practices focus on reintegration of basic aspects of personhood as well as restoring balance, harmony, and coherence" (Buchwald, Beals, & Manson, 2000, as cited in Weaver, 2002, pg. 10).

Exploring what is already known about this issue does not reveal much material. In the words of Murphy et al. (2003), "There is limited research on domestic violence within American Indian families. Much of the information that has been collected focuses on determining the scope of the problem" (pg. 161). This is problematic because it is clear Native Americans are affected by domestic violence at an alarming rate. One study done by Minnesota Department of Corrections affirms this argument. Wolk (1982) states, "Domestic violence affected an estimated 50% of American Indian families" (cited by Murphy et al.). In the same article, Chapin (1990) reported an even higher estimate, "Approximately 80% of the American Indian families in urban areas has a history of family violence" (cited by Murphy et al.).

No research was available that asks the batterers who have completed domestic violence programs to talk about their individual experiences or explain what helped them out of their situations and not re-abuse. Chester, Robin, Koss, Lopez & Goldman (1994) point this out (cited by Murphy et al., 2003) by stating, “research done on domestic violence within the lives of American Indians often relies predominately on quantitative methodologies, sometimes using assessment scales not designed for multicultural application” (pg. 161). I believe it is important to hear individual stories and find out from members of the culture itself how they view this issue and how they handle it. It appears that there is no research specifically with the Native men or populations in mind.

A research study conducted on the needs of domestic violence in Native Communities goes into this idea further by stating, “...the literature on the topic is sparse, and the empirical research on how to intervene with domestic violence (dv) in an Indian population is virtually non-existent” (Norton and Manson, 1995, as cited in Jones, 2007, pg. 113).

I believe this study will be helpful to uncover valuable information that can help Native Americans, not only victims of domestic violence, but also abusers who are seeking treatment. As Murphy et al. (2003) puts it, “it is incumbent upon social workers to understand the worldview of the clients with whom we work. That worldview becomes clearer as we develop awareness of our clients’ culture, history, degree of traditionality, spirituality, and language” (pg. 176).

I also believe, the information uncovered will be helpful for agencies in the region surrounding the reservation, because the Oneida reservation is so integrated into this community, and the chance of working with this population can be even greater.

Understanding and knowing the populations you work with is important in order to truly serve their needs, especially when working with clients who have sensitive needs. Jones (2007) points out, if agencies are not culturally sensitive Native people will not seek out services as she argues,

Workers and agencies need to be trained in the culturally appropriate means of responding to DV. Respondents indicated low levels of cultural sensitivity could lead to a lack of trust, and unwillingness by Native Americans to use services. Many Native Americans will not seek help because of fear or lack of trust in services (pg. 116).

In a reflection on wellness among Native Americans and the need for it in agencies who work with this population Weaver (2002) adds, "Social workers, nurses, and other helping professionals are working to develop interventions and programs that will help individuals and families to restore balance torn asunder by substance abuse, violence, and loss of traditions" (pg. 10).

### Research Questions

The research questions to be explored are the following:

1. What impact does a domestic violence program have in a male's healing experience?
2. What works well for male participants in their healing experience in a domestic violence program?
3. Do cultural components play a role in the successful program elements?

### Sampling

The target population the study focused on was men from one tribal community who have completed a domestic violence program. A non-probability sampling method was used, which was appropriate for this qualitative study, which does not rely on using random sampling methods. Based on the population studied and because it is drawn from a small community where this program is located, an availability sampling technique was used. As Engel and Schutt (2009) discuss, “elements are selected for availability sampling because they are available or easy to find” (pg. 131).

The sample consisted of male individuals who had recently completed the Oneida Men’s Domestic Violence Program and were willing to participate in the research project. The original intention of this research was to interview three to five participants for the study, but six interviews were conducted. One of the implications for the sampling methodology is that the results will not be able to be generalized to other tribal communities.

### Measurements

There were three key variables in this study: program impact, program effectiveness, and cultural components. The nominal definition for program impact is what the participants describe as helpful tools the program introduced to them, which helped them change their abusive behavior. The nominal definition for what worked well in the program was which services, groups, discussions etc. that worked for them specifically so they were able to heal and not re-abuse their partners. There was no specific limit/criteria set on the things participants could describe as what helped them through the program, because there are many different things in the program people respond to for their healing. The nominal definitions for culture components would be the spiritual practices the

program (such as smudging, sweat lodge, talking circle, etc.) uses during their 26-week domestic violence program.

To measure these variables the following is the questionnaire used in the interviews with individual research participants:

1. What impact did the domestic violence program have on your life after you became involved in the program?
2. Were there certain parts of the program that you enjoyed? Did not enjoy?
3. What worked well for you specifically in helping you to heal from your experience?
4. What worked well for you to challenge you to change your behaviors, so you would not re-offend?
5. What are your thoughts about the culture components of the program?
6. Do you think the cultural parts in the program helped you be successful in completing the program?
7. What do you define as culture?
8. Was culture a key factor in you not re-offending?
9. What could have been helpful for you in the program?

Because this was a qualitative study, clients who have recently completed a domestic violence program were interviewed one on one. The researcher worked collaboratively with the men's domestic violence program to identify participants who have recently completed the program, and the researcher personally asked each participant by phone if they were willing participate in the study. When the participants were called, a script was used to introduce the Principle Investigator (PI), the reason for the call and to find out if the males were interested in participating in the study. If the



participant agreed to take part in the study, a date and time was set up to meet at a private location on site at the Oneida Social Services.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcriptions were reviewed and parts of the conversations that were not relevant to the research questions were eliminated. The purpose of this study was not to create standardized questions that the interview participants would have similar answers to and understandings of. Instead, the purpose of the study was to create questions that would give the participants the opportunity to share their individual experience, while giving interviewer the opportunity to accurately record and capture their real meaning. This assured measurement validity in this study.

### Research Design

For this research project a non-experimental design was used, more specifically the one group posttest only design. The reason this design was used was based on Engel & Schutt's (2009) description of the design, which says, "the design is characterized by only one group without a control or comparison group, and it includes no pretest observations so that there are no benchmarks to which the posttest scores can be compared" (pg. 194). This description applies because there was not a group to compare to and there was no pretest observation done. Originally it was thought, using a quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design would be the best selection, because there is no random assignment in the study. However, that is the only similarity with the study and this design, since there is no pretest-posttest group done in the study, this design would not work.

The implications for choosing the one group posttest design is outlined by Engel and Schutt (2009) as, “this design has little utility for researchers trying to establish an intervention’s effectiveness” (pg. 195). This applied to the study because an intervention was looked at. This suggests that results of this study could not be used to draw any conclusions about the program impact or about the impact of other domestic violence programs on clients.

## Findings

### *General Patterns*

Interviews with six former program participants revealed four general themes apparent throughout the data: (1) what worked well, (2) facilitator, (3) program impact and (4) culture components and subthemes under each theme. Subthemes of importance for what worked well them were: (1a) problem solving, (2b) taking care of myself, (3c) community based, (4d) teaching me facts, (5e) admit abuse, (6f) speaking out & owning up, (7g) building support among men, (8h) gender education, (9i) having time to work this out, (10j) everything and (11k) homework. Key facilitator attributes identified were: (1a) respectful, (2b) accessibility, (3c) challenged, (4d) bold style, (5e) made things clear, (6f) role model, and (7g) knowledgeable. Areas of importance highlighted in the program impact category were: (1a) recognize how it affect my children, (2b) helped me sober up, (3c) changed my life around, (4d) recognize what abuse is, (5e) making good decisions, (6f) changed demeanor, (7g) getting in touch with my feelings, (8h) dealing with emotions, and (9i) personal impact on relationships. Cultural components found important by participants were: (1a) internalized oppression, (2b) values, (3) balanced me, (4) sweat lodges, (5) talking circles, and (6) realizing my culture doesn’t accept abuse.

*What Worked Well*

Interview participants were asked questions about what helped them or worked well while they were involved in the domestic violence group and what aided them through their healing experience. It is important to remember each individual healing experience is different; however, there were some responses by interview participants that were similar, and other responses that were more helpful for participants individually. These data highlight what the participants found most helpful.

Problem solving was viewed by some participants as what worked well for them while in the program. One man stated,

So a lot of times we had to go to group and say what happened and how we felt and why we did something and try to underline our main feelings and what we could've done differently. That really helped out with my mind processing, and it helped me to learn warning signs of what were my triggers that would build me up to becoming violent or angry, and rageful. I learned all that.

Another participant discussed how he learned, "other ways out basically and other ways of handling the situation, like taking a step back and analyzing the big picture, thinking of kids who are still going to be involved in our lives," while another man noted, "I am able to participate and open myself up to make mistakes."

One interview participant stated the importance of, "learning to take care of myself, being able to take time with the group and get out of situations." Another discussed the importance of the program being community based and stated, "I was able to stay in the community ... and continue to walking on this red road."

Participants highlighted the importance of learning facts while they were in the program. One participant noted,

understanding beliefs. [Facilitator] would teach that first your beliefs are the root to the decisions you make, so your beliefs will control your feelings, your feelings will control your actions. So changing our beliefs was the key to start a new way of life: a new lifestyle.

One man stated,

I learned negative thinking and positive thinking and self-talk. Men, we are our own worst enemy. We tell our self-negative stuff to make ourselves angry, so we learned to tell ourselves positive reinforcement, instead of negative reinforcement, and that helped me out a lot.

Another man added, "It was the knowledge that [the facilitator] taught me."

One male reported admitting the abuse he did to his significant other as something that challenged him and worked well for him and stated, "Having to own up and admit it was wrong, the violence and physical abuse. Admitting what it is I'm hurting and how I feel."

Encouraging the program participants to speak out and engage in-group discussions was highlighted as an approach that worked well for some of the men. One participant stated,

when [the facilitator] he allowed us to speak. I found that that helped me that I needed to talk about what I was going through. I needed to share that instead of walking around keeping it in. I think that was the best part, when he allowed us express ourselves to, you know to open up that was helpful for me.

Another man noted,

When I first started I didn't really enjoy having to come in and sit and listen. It got uncomfortable to sit and listen and open up to what was bothering me and what kinds of hurts I had in my relationship, that I hold. It was hard to open up my problems in my relationship and past fights and being able to talk about it. It was hard to admit it that I was an abuser at first, so everything was hard you know sitting through the movies. That's because I didn't want to open myself up... It kept me going and helped out a lot.

Other participants described speaking out as taking responsibility and one added,

Well there was, owning up. So we had to go to group and own up to our problems of what got us there. Owning up in-group and owning up to what we did in-group and at ceremonies, and starting to participate.

Another man described owning up as challenging for him but helpful when he stated,

What challenged me was, the opening up. I had my hurts in my past relationships, that I felt like no one would listen to. Being able to be vulnerable was real hard. So what challenged me was to open up and find some comfort in people.

Building support among the men in the program worked well for group participants also. One man stated that the program component that worked well for him was "being able to talk to other men about what is going on in my life." When talking about supporting other group members in sweat lodges another man said, "[The facilitator] always wanted you to at least show up, to support everybody in the group, because everybody is there for each other." Another man talked about having a place where men could relate to each other

and said that what helped was “coming to a place where there is other men who have gone through similar situations, so you can relate there and it helps you.”

Gender education was a topic that stood out and worked well for one program participant, who stated,

The main things that stood out to me in the whole program was understanding why, the difference between when a man and a woman get into an argument. The man usually ends up going to jail, because the woman fears the man and the man doesn't fear the woman. Understanding that, like when they get mad at each other and they start fighting, well usually the man is never afraid. I noticed that was one thing, that the men come there and they didn't realize that and that stood out.

When one man was asked what worked well for him specifically in helping him to heal, he simply cited, “Time; it didn't happen over night. I didn't change over night.”

Another man enjoyed having homework to take home and cited it as challenging him and his behavior not to reoffend by stating, “Basically, (it was) a lot of the paperwork that we brought home.”

Some of the men felt the entire program worked well for them. One man said, “I liked all of it.” Another added, “I liked it all; it was a good learning experience,” while another man stated, “Oh no, the whole program was helpful.”

### *Facilitator*

Interview participants noted characteristic styles and techniques used by group facilitators as particular aspects of the program that worked well for them in healing. This was an area of importance the researcher did not anticipate at the start of the study. One interview participant discussed respectfulness of the facilitator as being helpful for him,

and stated, "I would say, it was just our counselor. He was very respectful I would say. He was very passionate about helping me." Another man shared this view by adding, "He wanted to help us men, but was very respectful and humble about it, and that's what helped me. He helped me get through it."

Accessibility was pointed out by one participant as being something that stood out for him, saying, "But then I finally just called [the facilitator] up once and said, you know I need help, and he was right there and willing to help." Another man talked about the facilitator testing him and said, "Probably I would have to say, maybe [the facilitator] challenged me, just by listening to him." Another participant talked about the facilitator's straightforward style working well for him and stated, "[The facilitator] uses a lot of punch lines. He get's right to the point, and he's not hidden behind anything, he's bold."

Making things clear for group participants was something that helped the group participants to understand and learn while in sessions. One man discussed this when he said,

[The facilitator] would help us when we had a question; [facilitator] would break it down for the group. He would helps us learn/re-learn how this all started and he would help us analyze it, and he would break things down so we could see clearer of how it all became, and how next time, we could have a solution.

Another interview participant added, "He breaks it down to you in dummy terms."

The facilitator being a good role model and a good example for the group participants to learn from for the men in the group was thought of as something helpful. One man noted this when he said, "I mean who better to learn from than somebody who's already been there. Um, a role model in the community." Another man had the same view

and added, “There was a lot of things that [the facilitator] said, from his personal experience that he would relate to the men.”

Having knowledge about domestic violence was also helpful. A participant highlighted this when he said, “He would already know what I was going to ask, and he’d answer the question without me asking, and that helped me a lot too.” Another participant affirmed this in his interview by saying, “Everything he was saying clicked with me. I noticed everything he’s been saying was true.”

### *Program Impact*

When looking at program impact, the researcher looked at what the interview participants identified as program components that had an effect on them personally during and after their participation in the domestic violence group.

Some of the group participants identified understanding of and recognizing the effect of abuse on their children as having an impact on their healing experience. A participant argued his children were the main reason he changed his behavior by stating,

I would say number one would be my children. When I sobered up my first son was just a year old and I didn’t want to pass that on. My children I would have to say is the number one reason, because I wanted to see my children grow up.

Another participant added to the same argument by stating, “Just thinking about my kid, because that’s all that matters to me.”

A few participants said that when they stopped drinking alcohol, this had a lasting impact in their healing and their life, and they credited the domestic violence group as helping them do that. One participant said, “Well after taking that class I did with [the



facilitator] and it helped me sober up.” Another participant made the same point and argued, “Sobering up. That was the biggest, the biggest thing for me was sobering up.”

The program was cited as helping some of the group participants make major life changes. As one interview participant said, “The first impact would be, it changed my life around.” Another man talked about the different ways his life was changed after he was involved with the group and said, “Now I can take care of my family, I have stabilized myself mentally. I hold down a job and I provide.”

Recognizing what abuse is and being able to identify the different types of abuse had lasting impact for some of the group participants as noted by one man who recognized that “even though I wasn’t physically hurting women, that verbally was just as bad.” Another man went more in depth about what he learned about abuse and the history of abuse by stating,

Also, I figured out what I was doing was wrong and I was being an abuser, a woman abuser. I learned a lot about our history of abuse through the Europeans and our own people and internalized oppression. I opened my eyes to not feel like I have to justify myself through abuse, like abusing women and everything that goes along with it.

Some of the interview participants notice an impact on decision-making and believe this has changed them for the better, stating, “The impact on me, after becoming involved is that I can make good decisions.” Another participant added, “Some things of the program I learned just helped me to consider thinking about certain things.”

Some program participants believed the program had an impact on changing their demeanor. One man believed his demeanor was different once he finished the program and

said he changed, “how I carry myself and talk to people.” Another man noted the same by adding, “I learned to carry myself in a good way and stand up to another man and tell him what he is doing isn’t right,” while another interview participant said, “After I became involved, I changed my whole outlook on my own actions and how I carried myself, with my friends, family and society.”

One interview participant discussed how the program was able to help him get connect with and not be afraid of his feelings by stating,

As a man I learned that as a man I don’t always have to be macho and tough. We have feelings and be afraid to be in touch with our feelings and not be afraid to make mistakes and have trust, forgive. Those things really helped me in my relationship, where she can trust me to be able to express herself and not be afraid that I am going to hit her.

Another interview participant noted how the group helped him deal with his feelings better by stating,

It helped me find other ways to deal with the emotions I was going through, which was hard ending a 12 year relationship with my girlfriend and three kids. There were a lot of bad things that were done and said, and the program helped me to deal with a lot of things.

One interview participant discussed the impact the program had on his involvement and desire to have better personal relationships with other people and said, “As I got more involved, I didn’t just want to learn about abuse, but I wanted to get more involved in my community. I wanted to learn about parenting.”

*Cultural Components*

Cultural components of the domestic violence program were identified by group participants as one of the main things that helped some of the men in completing the program and not re-offending. Many had learned about Native American culture for the first time, and the group was the starting point for them in changing their beliefs and understanding of what culture meant to each of them. For the purpose of this research study, cultural components are identified as general traditional Native American practices, which are shared and used by many different tribes. Even though the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin ran the program, the cultural components used were not entirely specific to the Oneida tribe.

The first item discussed by one of the interview participants was learning about internalized oppression of Native people and how it affected his people, which was helpful to him. He said, "I learned a lot about our history of abuse through the Europeans and our own people and internalized oppression."

Many interview participants discussed ways they reexamined their values, explored traditional Native beliefs, and sought to understand what culture meant to them as ways to help them in their healing experience. One man outlined this when he said, "I especially like the sweat lodges that [the facilitator] brought us to, it brought me back to being a Native man instead of out there walking around not knowing who I was and just following other people's values." Another man talked about his culture as, "finding out who I was and I mean, living by those ways that Native men lived way back then." Another interview participant discussed the difference between going through a program that had an emphasis on Native American values versus a program that he attended that did not, and said,

I went through another program, and I can't remember where it was, but it wasn't really for me. I mean, a lot of these classes that you go to are just kind of based on kind of "everybody's the same". But as a Native person, I'm not the same as everybody else, and there are certain values that I hold differently than people and, you know, [the facilitator] brings that out in all of us, and how he performs his classes.

One man commented, "This was the first time or the best time for me to start learning about the culture."

Another man described culture as,

Showing respect for everything around you, and not just people, but animals, the earth you walk on. It's how you walk in your life, you don't preach one way and then walk another, you have to do both at the same time.

Another interview participant described the traditional customs he participated in and how they helped him by stating, "we went to ceremonies, because that helped us, I would say to cleanse us, to find some guidance, to reclaim our identity as who we are and how we should be carrying ourselves." Another man described changing his values as something that really helped him to grow, by saying "Oh yeah... to this day, my spirituality is where I really grew, because I took it pretty personal, where I wanted to live the values of our ancestor, my native ancestors." Another participant described how his change in values really overtook him by stating, "Culture really took over, because there are some things in our culture where you got to carry. Things that we carry that are sacred and you have to believe in before you can move on in life."

One interview participant noted how the cultural components of the program helped stabilize him by stating,

So we had ceremonies that went along with the group and I felt comfortable there, it felt natural so I just went along with it. Then we learned our own history and reclaiming our honor and being able to just be our self, you know. So I liked the ceremonies a lot, which are the sweat lodge. I kept going and that's what helped me balance things out.

Going to the sweat lodges was another key component participants found helpful in healing. Many cited the sweat lodges as a way to cleanse spiritually. One man talked about the sweat lodge getting him involved and a way of making a commitment to the group and himself, when he said,

Yeah, I for me I think it was the sweats that got me more involved in everything... might have been a few months ago, I made a commitment to that fire with [the facilitator], and you know I told him verbally, you know I want to help and I want to do this and that. Ever since then, I've been sober and I have been helping out, you know.

One participant added, "The sweats they were good." While another man said, "Spiritually, I mean the sweat lodges helped me." Still another participant said, "we went to ceremonies, because that helped us, I would say to cleanse us, to find some guidance, to reclaim our identity as who we are and how we should be carrying ourselves."

Another man described the sweat lodges as a way of getting beyond his past when he said,

But the sweat lodges helped me get over all that, that's what I think helped me the most. I liked the sweat lodges a lot, if I could sweat everyday I would. After you're there, you feel really good.

One participant described the domestic violence group as a place to recover, where he could heal and said,

It's like a spiritual hospital, to help you recover from what you're dealing with. It helped me understand it was a place to get away and focus on dealing with my problems and the sweat lodge is a good place to let go. Let go of things, that you have built up inside you."

Talking circles was another cultural component of the domestic violence program that interview participants described as helpful to healing them, and one man described the talking circles to me by saying,

It was a group of guys and we start by you know, going around asking everybody how their week went and you know. It's awkward at first because you know; you were always told you know you're not supposed to talk about your feelings. But once you get passed all that, it's pretty simple to...come out and share with another man...'Yeah, I had a bad day, you know, this happened and that happened.' You know it comes to a point when it's easier now to do that. I mean like I said, the group of guys that still are with [the facilitator] are you know, we pretty much sweat all the time and we talk to each other every time we get a chance.

Some of them men discussed how they learned that traditional Native culture does not accept abuse. One man specifically talked about what traditional Native American man did not do to the women in their culture, and he described it as, "not yelling at their women

or hitting their women or swearing all the time. And to me that's what my culture is, you know and I work on that every day." Another man discussed what the facilitator taught them and helped them realize about Native culture, "[the facilitator] would say, we never lived this way, we never disrespected our women. The women were higher, they were the ones who had the last word." Another man added, "[the facilitator] would mostly talk about the native ways. [The facilitator] mixes the domestic violence and the spiritual ways together, and basically I said women were on top."

Another man added,

What [the facilitator] taught us a lot about in the program was, in the past how much respect was for women. (You know in traditional days, you know before the white man came) He gave us an idea of what respect was like for our women, and now it's all lost.

Another participant not only learned about how women were respected generations ago, but also how his people were oppressed,

[The facilitator] not only would tell us about it, but giving us reasons why and just things that we didn't know about and I didn't know about. It was helpful because then you kind of see where and when we were oppressed and how things were changed. When oppression came over, us that we had to change and live like the white man. So we were basically taught to acknowledge and remember what women stood for in the past and it's very humbling to see that, that's the way it was, and it actually helped me. I can't speak for everybody else, but it helped me to know how it was and how things were with men and women, family values and stuff like that.

Another participant talked about how Indigenous people changed their beliefs from Native to non-Native encouraged domination over women, stating,

We take over European culture and we keep our Native culture just on the side, and use European culture, where women are submissive and we're suppose to own our women and control our women, and it works for us. So we adopted them, so we get our way. It seems pretty easy and we feed each other's ego that way.

Another man also discussed comparing European and Native values and described it as,

We kind of went over European history and understood that was where it came from. Then we went over native culture and this is how it was, women are respected and are scared and our children were never hit and domestic violence was rare.

Then in European culture, it was just the normal thing and we learned to identify that.

## Conclusion

### *Discussion*

My goal in evaluating the experiences of male abusers who completed the Oneida Men's Domestic violence program was to understand what was helpful to them in the program so they would not continue the pattern of abuse with their current or future partners. It was my argument that the cultural components of the domestic violence program would be the driving force behind the men's not re-abusing. While there is clear evidence from the interviews that this is the case, there is also evidence that it was more than just the cultural components that helped the men. For example, for each of the men, not only did they value cultural aspects of the program, but they each had to make personal



choices to engage in the program and decide to make better choices in their personal lives and in their relationships as well.

In these interviews, it is also important to note how the education about Native culture, support from fellow Native men, and the integration of Native traditions was important for each of the interview participants. These experiences allowed the men to feel comfortable and let down their guard and to make better choices.

This information is relevant to the social work profession because the themes identified in this research can help professionals who work with abusers who are Native American. Professionals might find it helpful to integrate some of the cultural components identified in this study into their professional practice to help clients find ways to heal and to change. Also, by integrating some of the Native American cultural components in professional practices, agencies will display a more culturally competent atmosphere, which will allow clients to feel more comfortable engaging in services.

### *Limitations*

Although the program serves not only Oneida tribal members, but partners of Oneida tribal members, all of the participants were Native American, and it would have been useful to interview group participants who were non-Native to get their perspective on the cultural components of the program. Another limitation was that some of the helpful tools identified involved the facilitator's personal style itself, which can only be replicated to a certain extent. Finally, all of our information about interview participants was based on self-reports of not re-abusing, and we did not have access to information to verify this independently.

### *Recommendations*

Research on this topic is important, especially in working with Native American populations, because as noted earlier there is limited research available to help professionals understand what is helpful when working with Native people to help end abuse. It is recommended that future studies replicate this research study. Also, it is advised that this study be replicated with other agencies that work with Native American populations to identify what cultural components were helpful to them and to find out if there is a need for similar cultural components in agencies that work with other Native populations. It is also recommended, individuals interested in this area find out from the clients' perspective what they understand cultural competence to be. Another suggestion would be to interview non-Native participants who participate in Native American traditional ceremonies to find out if practicing in those ceremonies helped them to not re-abuse as well.

### *Dissemination of Findings*

The findings of this study were shared one on one personally with the director of the agency and included discussion about the cultural components of the program and how helpful it was to the clients. Not only did I share the importance of the cultural components helping the participants, but I also included discussion of the facilitator style, what worked well for the men, and what impact the program had on the interview participants. Also, it is my intention to give a copy of the final report of this paper to the director of the agency.

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