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## Cultural Competency for Native Women at Southern Minnesotan Anti-Violence Advocacy Programs

Alissa Shape  
*Minnesota State University, Mankato*

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Cultural Competency for Native Women at  
Southern Minnesotan Anti-Violence Advocacy Programs

By

Alissa R. Shape

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science  
In  
Gender and Women's Studies

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2018

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Cultural Competency for Native Women at Southern Minnesotan Anti-Violence  
Advocacy Programs

Alissa R. Shape

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's  
committee:

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Dr. Shannon Miller, Advisor

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Dr. Laura Harrison

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Dr. Chelsea Mead

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated in two parts.

First, to the advocates who contributed their thoughts and their hopes. Your honesty is inspiring. I am forever touched by your commitment to a world without violence.

Second, this thesis is dedicated to the missing and murdered Indigenous women across North America and their families. You are not forgotten.

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in every stressful moment has given me the strength I needed to succeed. To my dad, mom, and sister Claire, thank you for carrying me through all the tough moments of my life. I love you and I hope all of you are as proud of this as I am.

## **Abstract**

An abstract for the thesis of Alissa R. Shape for the Master of Science in Gender and Women's Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota.

Title: Cultural Competency for Native Women at Southern Minnesotan Anti-Violence Advocacy Programs

Violence against Native American women is heavily documented within the state of Minnesota. However, there is limited research documenting the processes advocates use to help Native women. Though there has been an increase in organizations dedicated to addressing the intersections of race and gender-based violence, much is unclear regarding the extent to which different types of programming are implemented across the state. Thus, this research study examined the implementation of cultural competency, a type of anti-violence programming, by advocates at one organization in Southern Minnesota. I hypothesized that advocates at the organization would have limited resources for implementing cultural competency for Native women and would have varying knowledge of how to incorporate it into their advocacy practice. This study found that although knowledge of the history of violence against Native women played a part in a lack of cultural competency several other causes, such as funding and whiteness, defined advocates' experience with cultural competency. Using the reflections from advocates, I proposed several processes for the decolonization of advocacy for Native women.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Sexual violence is a pervasive issue within Minnesota and across the United States. This is evident in statistics that have remained stable and slowly improving across decades of reporting. “Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being” by the White House Council on Women and Girls (WHCWG) notes that within a thirty-year period, non-fatal violent crimes against women, non-fatal attacks on women by intimate partners, and rates of rape are decreasing and remaining at stable rates (55, 57-58). Though these statistics provide some hope for the improvement of women’s lives, other important factors including violence experienced by specific racial groups require deeper analysis.

As inspiring as the improvements noted in “Women in America” may be, the report neglects to acknowledge the history of sexualized violence against Native American women. The WHCWG acknowledged the need for a deeper analysis of violence against women in their report “Women and Girls of Color”, noting that twenty eight percent of American Indian women are raped within their lifetimes and fifty two percent of American Indian women experience physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes (37). However, a study by the National Institute for Justice has a reported rate of one in three American Indian women being sexually assaulted within a year and four in five American Indian women experiencing some type of violence within their lifetime. They also note that American Indian women experience sexual violence at more than two times the national average (Rosay 35). With the national population of self-identified American Indian people at 2.9 million out of over 300 million total (less than one percent), more questions need to be asked as to why Native American women

are more likely to experience sexual violence, when their racial identity occupies a marginal section of American census data (Norris et al. 1).

In Minnesota, the rates of sexual violence against women are contradicting. The most recent sexual assault reports from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Minnesota's rates of violence are increasing and remaining stable, rather than decreasing and remaining stable (Minnesota Department of Health 2). However, other sources of reporting in Minnesota corroborate national trends, with numbers of reported violence falling each year of Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). Dohman et al. with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) report that the crime rate for all reported rapes in 2016 was forty-two per one hundred thousand people. Other sexual offenses, which include all types of sexual violence except for forcible rape, prostitution and commercialized vice, have a crime rate of seventy-four per one hundred thousand (18). Because the BCA's reports are UCRs, they cannot account for rapes and other kinds of sexual violence that are not reported or do not reach reporting and prosecuting stages. To answer to the gap in information on sexual violence that goes unreported on a national level, the National Research Council of the National Academies (NRC) created a Consensus Study Report. Using research from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the National Women's Study, the NRC determined that non-reporting accounted for sixty-five to eighty-four percent of rapes (36).

With a self-identified American Indian population of 63,000 (1.2%) out of a total 5.4 million Minnesotans, the use of the one in three statistic would mean that nearly eleven thousand women could be expected to report their rape (U.S. Census Bureau). However, violence against American Indian Women in Minnesota is not well

documented by state institutions, beyond estimates made based on U.S. Census demographics. This leaves research on the intersections on race and sexual violence in Minnesota to anti-violence coalitions. Coalitions like Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition have released reports on violence estimates in Minnesota, but they primarily deal with issues of prostitution ("Be Informed"). Even with issues of prostitution and sex trafficking, these coalitions assert that the main issues contributing to the high level of violence against American Indian women include the complexity of federal and tribal jurisdiction, as well as lasting effects of the colonization of Minnesota.

Research centered on understanding the context of violence against Native women in Minnesota and across the United States is extensive. However, scholarship focused on the intersection of violence against Native women and perspectives of anti-violence advocacy programming is limited. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which anti-violence organizations incorporate cultural competency for Native women into programming and services. From this purpose, this thesis grew to focus on white staff who were interested in understanding their work for Native clients at a deeper level.

### **A Note on Language**

Researchers, institutions, and communities have different terminology for specific identities. Because the attribution of identities differs across texts and personal narratives, I will briefly explain how I intend to address specific group identities and key terms relevant to this research. For this note on language, I address differences in terminology for Native identity, anti-violence advocacy, and victim/survivor identity.

There are a variety of ways in which researchers and identity groups refer to

people who have historically resided in the United States. Native Americans, Indigenous Americans, and American Indians are three common terms used in this thesis and are used in various contexts. The difference in usage is due, in part, to my incorporation of direct quotes from a variety of sources which incorporate different terminology. For example, in addressing census and demographic data the term American Indian is used. As a term for an identity group American Indian is hotly contested, with activists, linguists, and historians alike arguing around the history of the term and its contemporary usage. Russell Means argues that the term Native American is the appropriative and ambiguous term for Indigenous populations across the United States, which he believed was based on a “bastardization of the Spanish term ‘en dios’” (“I am an American Indian, Not a Native American!”). In contrast, this etymology of the term, as well as the inclusion as the official term in government documents, has more to do with Columbus misnomers and treaty terminology (Wilton 163, UNC School of Education 1). In other areas of this thesis, such as the results and discussion chapters, I use terms self-identified by research participants.

Second, there are a variety of terms to refer to sexual assault advocacy, domestic violence advocacy, and the complex web of organizations associated with this practice. The practice of advocating against sexual and domestic violence as an established set of programs, with their own organization philosophies poses another space for a discussion on word choice. Here, I will refer to organizations that use counseling and activism as a means to prevent and heal from sexual and domestic violence as “anti-violence advocacy programs” or just “advocacy programs.” The focus on the term “advocacy” is reflective of the language used by the research participants in this study.

Finally, I chose to refer to victims and survivors of gender-based violence as “clients.” Discussions on the usage of client, victim, and survivor to refer to people experiencing violence show disagreement on the conditions for when to use each term (Papendick and Bohner 2-4). Because many advocates prefer to mirror the language used by the people experiencing violence, victim and survivor may often be interchangeable (RAINN). Extending this mirroring practice to my own research, I use client because it reflects the language used by participants in the study. I also use the term client because it affirms the experiences of participants in this research study, while capturing the philosophy of their organizations.

### **Organization of Chapters**

Chapter two places this research within existing scholarship on sexual violence against Native women and cultural competency programming. The literature review has three sections: Native Women in Minnesota, Native Feminist Thought, and Sexual Assault Advocacy. In the first section, Native Women in Minnesota, I detail a brief discussion of settler colonialism in Minnesota and history of Native women’s resistance. In the second section, Native Feminist Thought, I discuss the theoretical basis for organizing against gender-based violence experienced by Native women. In the final section, Sexual Assault Advocacy, I address the history of rape crisis and domestic violence shelters, programming of cultural competency, and practices of culturally-centered advocacy.

Chapter three, the methodology section, is where I reflect on method for analysis of this research. I discuss theoretical frameworks I used for data collection and

discussion. I also reflect on the rationale for the research, recruitment and data collection, and my reflexivity as a researcher.

In Chapter four I present and explain my results. This chapter includes themes that have emerged from participant responses, including cultural competency programming, barriers to cultural competency, and the unique needs of Native American women. The final chapter, chapter five, contains a discussion of my results, suggestions for implementing decolonized cultural competency for Native women, limitations, and suggestions for future research.



## **Literature Review**

This literature review focuses on the scholarship from historians, critical race feminists, and social service professionals. I begin with a discussion of literature addressing the complexities of the experiences of Dakota and Ojibwe women Minnesota; highlighting their resistance to systems of power. Next, I discuss components of Native feminist thought, which includes contributions by both Native and non-Native theorists. I conclude with a discussion of anti-violence advocacy, with an emphasis on cultural competency practices.

### **Native Women in Minnesota**

The stories by and treatment of Native women are integral to understanding the history of Southern Minnesota and the current client base of advocacy programs. In this section, I briefly review literature on the history of Native women's resistance in Minnesota and detail some of the colonialist interactions that lead to Native feminist theories on violence against women.

Searching for literature detailing the lives of Native women in Minnesota at any point in time produces many narratives from the perspective of white authors and historians. As a result, the body of knowledge on women's lives is mixed with historical representations from many different perspectives. In the time periods below, I intentionally highlight some accounts of women's resistance that are from women themselves, while supplementing information to address narratives of colonization.

Native women are not a monolithic entity. They, as Choctaw scholar Devon Mihesuah contends in "Commonalty and Difference: American Indian Women and History," have a variety of factors impacting their lives, including race, gender, class,

different tribal systems, and cultural shifts (16). Because of these factors in Native women's experiences, it is important to address available narratives of their history and their resistance while acknowledging the unique differences within Minnesota.

### *Early Interactions*

There are several narratives of Dakota and Ojibwe women in Minnesota during initial interactions with European traders (1640-1862). These narratives from both white and Native scholars help to illuminate women's experiences and address cognitive dissonance through the early 1600s, when Europeans were first making contact with Native communities. These accounts also help to address the absences in narratives from both Dakota and Ojibwe women.

According to Native American poet and novelist Paula Gunn Allen, Minnesota Plains women were well-respected both in spirituality and community organization (96). Dakota and Lakota women participated in different but equal community work and work in the home, which attested to the respect of their roles (Collins 6-7). Beyond respect of women's material ownership and responsibilities, scholars Roger Herring and Tarrell Portman also note that the strength and survival of Plains communities was fortified by women's carrying of spiritual practices and oral histories (187). The retention of oral history and memory of cultural practices depended on women.

From "Farmers, Warriors, Traders: A Fresh Look at Ojibway Women" by Priscilla Buffalohead and "*I Have Not Learned Anything About Native American Women in Minnesota*": *An Educational Workshop about Indigenous Women of Minnesota* by feminist scholar Amy Anderson, much is documented about Ojibwe women's roles and experiences. Like Dakota women, Ojibwe women's place in society is respected. Women

hold egalitarian roles, exercise rights over their bodies (Anderson 24-26). Additionally, during early trading with Europeans, Ojibwe women were often present in negotiating trade deals (Buffalohead 240).

In addition to these accounts of Dakota and Ojibwe women's lives, historian Mary Wingerd details a historical cognitive dissonance in *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*. The dissonance and rejection of Native history comes not only in books and settler misunderstandings, but also in our state flag, which represents a "harmonious passing of the torch" from Native people in Minnesota to homesteaders (Wingerd xii). Misrepresentation is also evidenced in the intentional rewriting of the acquisition of Minnesota, as well as the abandonment of treaties (Wingerd xiii). This depiction is eclipsed in mounting tensions between settlers and the Dakota and Ojibwe.

The "Santee Dakota," the Mdewakantons, Wahpekutes, Sissetons, and Wahpetons, were considered brave and courageous by other tribes living in the Upper-Midwest. Wingerd corroborates Allen, Collins, and Herring and Portman by noting that both Minnesota's Ojibwe and Dakota depended on and respected women in their societies, as they occupied central roles in social, political, and economic spaces (13). Women's roles were equal to that of men, and their place in kinship offerings were often misunderstood and rejected by French explorers and missionaries (Wingerd 14-15).

However, within early interactions between Natives and explorers Wingerd argues that true intentions and systems of oppression were being formed, which negatively impacted Native women as early as 1640 (14). Naming the Dakota the "Sioux" after "Nadouessioux," or "Nadouessis" which was an incorrect interpretation of an Ottawa word meaning "enemy" European settlers determined all tribes associating

with Siouan language groups to be met with caution (Peacock and Day 138, Westerman and White 34, Wingerd xiv). The Dakota, pressured to challenge narratives set by explorers like Radisson, often allied themselves with the Ojibwe in an attempt to regain political strength (Wingerd 12-13). These narratives, in addition to writing off Native people as aggressive or hostile, were also extended to misconstrue the Dakota and Ojibwe as sexually promiscuous (Wingerd 14).

Kinship relationships and marriages with European settlers by both Ojibwe and Dakota women changed marriage roles for communities. Penny Gonzalez notes this shift as an early function of conquest in “Ojibwa Women and Marriage: From Traditional to Modern Society”. The influence of white settlers and patriarchal ideology created a precarious position where Ojibwe women were marrying into new social dynamics and new nations (Gonzalez 33-34). Wingerd also addresses the impacts of intermarriage, but notes that it had a specific economic function, as well as serving as a political buffer for trading and “cultural brokerage” through the 1700s and even until the mid-1800s (14). In this case, marriages between Dakota women and white trappers and traders created entirely different kinship networks that facilitated trade and cohabitation within the geographic area of Minnesota. Both the Dakota and Ojibwe made intentional efforts to maintain kinship and mutually beneficial relationships with Europeans, though scholars note that these relationships were strained (“The US-Dakota War of 1862”, Wingerd 19).

With the increasing pressure of trappers, other explorers, and settlers, who were incentivized by their own governments (and later the United States government), Native people in Minnesota were faced with a loss of political power, respect, and resources (Peacock and Day 140). Representations of women from this period (the early nineteenth

century) by settlers, traders, and other Europeans still characterized Native women as subordinate and uncultured. As Wziyatawin Angela Wilson notes in the article “Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches,” consistent colonial tactics were employed between the early trading practices of the 1700s and 1862 as a means to erode Dakota culture and resistance (195).

### *The US-Dakota War & Aftermath*

A series of treaties and legislation are essential to address as the forefront of the US-Dakota War. These treaties and legislation, which include Pike’s Treaty, 1805 Treaty, Doty Treaty, Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, Treaty of Mendota, and the Homestead Act ultimately worked against the Dakota and the Ojibwe. Beginning with Pike’s Treaty in 1805, the US government reaches an agreement with 150 Dakota, establishing 100,000 acres of land for a trading post and fort. This agreement was marketed as being beneficial for the Dakota because they were able to use the land in coexistence with the incoming military men, however, there are some arguments that suggest some Dakota chiefs did not approve (Westerman and White 140, Wingerd 77-78).

Following Pike’s Treaty, a series of treaties were negotiated between both the Ojibwe and the Dakota for land in 1837. This land, between the St. Croix and the Mississippi, was exchanged to the United States for annuities for the Dakota and payments of money and provisions to the Ojibwe (“The US-Dakota War of 1862”). The lasting complications of this treaty were felt by both the Dakota and Ojibwe, with the latter suing the state of Minnesota in 1990 for infringement of treaty rights (Anderson 31, Wingerd 193). Tensions and expectations for payments continued as the Doty Treaty

(1841), to provide permanent homes to the Dakota on the Mississippi, failed in negotiations (“The US-Dakota War of 1862). As Wingerd argues, escalating interactions between Dakota leaders and US government backed the Dakota into the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the Treaty of Mendota (200). Again, promises of reservations and money were not kept.

The sharp increase in homesteading proved to be the strain on US-Dakota relationships that could not be reconciled (“The US-Dakota War of 1862”). Kinship relations prior to the escalation were common, and even welcomed within groups of men working as trappers and traders, but quickly disintegrated with the introduction of white women through homesteading (Wingerd 145). With more women and European families entering Minnesota, mixed-race kinship relations received less support, and eventually gave way to dominant narratives of Native women being used as sexual objects, rather than being seen as equal and important human beings in early Minnesotan society (Wingerd 147). The disgracing of Mdewakanton women in particular by white soldiers entering Minnesota reflected the establishment of a new and racialized social order, effectively squashing any sense of harmony that may have been felt in relations between ethnic groups prior to the early-1800s.

Along with increasing discomfort between groups, settlers and traders who were keen to further establish government-sanctioned exploitation of Native lands, petitioned to the government to ratify Minnesota as a state. Prominent figures like James Goodhue and Henry Sibley’s misogynist and Eurocentric assertion of manifest destiny and lack of respect for relationships with the Dakota framed homesteaders’ opinions within the years leading up to the war (Wingerd 143-145). Even with the sharp increase in European

extraction of wealth and resources in Minnesota, Wingerd contends that Dakota and Ojibwe women had key roles as entrepreneurs and motivators for resiliency, not seen as a threat to patriarchy because the food they were able to produce far outnumbered the quantities whites could produce (150).

The US-Dakota War began August 17, 1862, when Wahpeton men killed settlers in Acton, Minnesota as a response to frustrations over overpopulation of settlers and intentional starvation of the Dakota (Wingerd 259). While some trading agreements and other relationships had managed to survive the stress of homesteading, Wingerd notes that starvation, as a result of the one-sided treaties proved to be the final spark that ignited war (262, 301-302).

Though the allied Dakota parties experienced initial success in the conflict, Alexander Ramsey and Henry Sibley eventually pulled together forces to destroy the Dakota (Wingerd 309). In the aftermath of the war it was clear, according to both Wingerd (311-312) and the Minnesota Historical Society, that there was no unified front advocating for war in the Dakota communities of Southern Minnesota. As an extension of decades of racialized tension, white people in Minnesota demanded retribution for the war and, under orders from President Lincoln, 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato on December 26, 1862 (“The US-Dakota War of 1862,” Wingerd 325). Demanding further penance for “crimes” committed by the Dakota, white political leaders subjected the remaining Native people to exile, forcing men, women, and children to be interned at Fort Snelling (“The US-Dakota War of 1862).

Formal exile of the Dakota came in early 1863 with the passing of the “Act for the Removal of the Sissetons, Wahpaton, Medawakanton, and Wahpakoota” (Wingerd 331).

The removal displaced thirteen hundred to twenty-one hundred Dakota from Southern Minnesota to Manitoba, Canada, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota. Seeking refuge, some Dakota return Minnesota, and in 1889 Congress passed legislation allowing the Dakota to formally return (“The US Dakota War of 1862”).

While little is mentioned of women during exile, what was documented speaks to the resilience and the strength of Dakota women, as well as the lasting historical trauma. First, historians Gary Anderson and Alan Woolworth, editors of *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862*, contend that one of the primary reasons for the escalation between the US military and the Dakota was the violence committed against Dakota women (19). Further, narratives from liaison Samuel J. Brown illuminated the continuing resilience of Dakota women, remarking that they had frequently saved other Native and non-Native people, often at the expense of violence against themselves and their children (74, 227). Dakota woman Wichahpewastewin also recalled the violence against women in exile, reflecting that women were shackled as slaves, taunted, and beaten by whites (264).

Similar to the accounts of *Through Dakota Eyes*, Wingerd writes “the burden of survival fell primarily on women, who labored heroically to care for their children and parents” (335). Dakota woman Pamela Halverson, in her interview for the oral history project on the US-Dakota War, says this of the lasting trauma of the Dakota: “To be Dakota in Minnesota, what they went through, it overwhelms me. It takes me to why my people are the way they are today, and why we haven’t healed” (“The US-Dakota War of 1862”). The lasting effects of the Dakota Conflict, in fact, are an extension of decades of



exploitation and abuse of Native people in Minnesota, and the trauma from this experience continues into contemporary organizing efforts.

In the years following the exile of the Dakota, both Westerman and White (5) and Wilson (207) argue that Dakota women continued to resist colonial power, retelling the stories of exile to their surviving children and grandchildren. This retelling of lasting colonial violence of Minnesota continued, and carried to reservations upon further removal due to the privatization of their land under the Dawes Act (Peacock and Day 144). As Peacock and Day argue, this period is marked by “pendulum swings” in which American Indians were forced to assimilate under “protectionist policies” (144). Mihesuah also notes that within this time period from the 1900s to 1960s, the federal government was employing several programs and policies, flipping from tribal dependence to self-determination and individuality, all while maintaining 148 boarding schools (55). The use of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse within boarding schools, paired with decade-long shifts between government uplift and assimilation programs served as a means of disenfranchisement and social control against Native communities (Mihesuah 55).

### *Civil Rights & Red Power*

Two federal policies marked the beginning of the Red Power Movement during the civil rights era: House Concurrent Resolution 108, which determined that tribes would no longer be recognized under US law; and The Relocation Act of 1956, which was implemented as an uplift program to get as many as 750,000 Native Americans off reservations and into cities (Pevar 11). Historian Dan Stahl-Kovell traces Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) removal and assimilation efforts from the 1950s to 1970s as one

prominent space for which resistance to cultural assimilation occurred (20). Relocation and subsequent termination of tribal recognition sparked unrest from activists across the United States who were equally critical of the process which, in full effect, would mean the end of self-determination for Native people and the assertion that Native people were only a faded memory of colonization (23-24).

Even before its beginnings in Minnesota, the emerging movement of Red Power was met with racialized tension from non-Native people throughout the state, considering urbanization an “indian problem” (Shoemaker 443). These tensions, which were coupled with legal manipulation, lead to an increased social and political organization presence within the city of Minneapolis. This increase in social services and organizing led to a series of generations of sustained social groups by and for Native people that eventually produced AIM.

AIM held its first organizing meetings in Minneapolis in 1968, following urban and reservation struggles similar to those aforementioned by Stahl-Kovell (Shoemaker 447). Their organizing, which was considered by Shoemaker as a third generation of political organizing within Minneapolis, challenged seemingly inevitable loss of Indian identity through urbanization and relocation, and loss of rights and recognition through federal and state legislation (446-447). Minnesota Historical Society notes similar motivations, stating that the founding meeting, which featured over 200 people (including prominent women in the community), was initially meant to address racist treatment, poor housing, and unemployment and quickly developed into an organization for controlling the destiny of Native people (“AIM: Overview”).

Chronicling the life of AIM co-founder Dennis Banks, the documentary *A Good Day to Die* discusses the political activism of Native people in Minnesota, as well as white responses to Native activism. Banks discusses the consistent suppression and attempted cultural assimilation of Native people in Minnesota, which is traced from initial contact through forced removal of children to boarding schools. When Banks and others in Minneapolis saw anti-war protests and civil rights activism, they organized to respond to police brutality and surveillance within the community. “Confrontation politics” was the method for which AIM sought to address their platform, and what started with a march against police grew to militarized standoffs and Red Power solidarity across the nation.

Representation in AIM was met with many critiques of its emphasis on nationalism at the expense of Native women, and lack of acknowledgement of violence against women. This silencing of women within the modern civil rights movement led to the eventual creation of Women of All Red Nations. O’Sullivan briefly addresses this splintering of the Red Power movement in her research on WARN’s work with sterilization of Native women, noting that AIM’s concern with women’s issues were publicly mentioned but rarely beyond rhetorical (974). Consequently, AIM’s lack of incorporation of feminist issues in the midst of the feminist activism of the 1960s and 1970s signaled Native women’s marginalization from both the feminist movement and the Red Power movement. Issues of nationalism versus misogyny continued throughout the 1970s and had a lasting impact on Native women’s activism as a result (Silliman et al. 117).

WARN's growth from the Red Power movement signals several important components of Native women's resistance within Minnesota and the Midwest. First, activists recognized that Native women held leadership within Minnesotan activist spaces, yet their voices were not centered ("Commonalty of Difference" 18). Second, WARN connected its activism through red power to direct issues of medicalized racism and violation of Native women's bodies within the community. Sterilization and the use of Depo-Provera and Norplant were all issues centered in WARN's activism and have been used in contemporary studies of sexual violence in Minnesota ("Rape and the War against Native Women" 328). As a result of WARN's involvement within civil rights and the Red Power movement, the practice of creating reports such as the Shattered Hearts and Garden of Truth are foundational works in understanding the scope of violence against Native women today (Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center 11, Farley et al. 13). Finally, their work as activists marked the beginnings of a resurgence of culturally-centered healing practices for contemporary issues. Activism stemming from issues identified in the 1950s-1970s marked an integration of community-based healing, and this is seen in the creation of Native anti-violence organizations such as the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society and Sacred Circle, which incorporate traditional teachings into healing for Native survivors of violence (Agtuca 5).

### **Native Feminist Theory**

Because this research takes a specifically anti-colonialist stance and addresses colonialist interactions, it is important to discuss decolonized theoretical frameworks that are informed by Minnesota's history, as well as those that can be applied in advocacy programming. This section works to illuminate two important articulations: (1) what do

theorists say about Native women and feminism as a theoretical perspective, and (2) how does this perspective accept, reject, or mediate mainstream feminisms? These questions are answered in three concepts of Native Feminism: Gender, Race, and Nation, self-determination, and interconnectedness of violence against women.

### *Gender, Race, & Nation*

The intersections of gender, race, and nation provide a complex theoretical space for Native women's lived experiences. Here, this section of literature discusses differentiation in theory production of Native activists (as evidenced by the group WARN), intersections of racial identity and gender identity (again, in WARN), and finally in academic spaces (by Devon Mihesuah). These texts address the complexity of how Native women interact with other Native people, feminism, and academia, drawing comparisons and contrasting complexities within feminist identities and Indigenous identities.

In *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*, non-Native feminists Silliman et al. demonstrate theory production in the activist group WARN (117, 133). Women who started WARN created the activist group as a compliment to the American Indian Movement (AIM) and quickly articulated several differences that situated them as unique from both AIM and feminist movements in the United States. After experiencing limited visibility in AIM—which was predominantly run by men—women in the movement determined that they also wanted to preserve cultural identity, but that preservation had to exist simultaneously with acknowledging violence against Native women and sexism in the movement. Even in their slight separation from AIM, WARN activists noted that they still supported AIM's goals,

saying: “Our creation of an Indian women’s organization is not a criticism or division from our men... Only in this way can we organize ourselves as Indian women to meet our responsibilities,” (133). Here WARN articulated how they, as an organization, were distinct from the greater movement for sovereignty but as a compliment rather than in opposition. They emphasized organizing to preserve culture and resisting sexism as a means to achieve sovereignty and resist colonialism.

Similar to the distinction drawn between WARN and AIM, WARN also maintains a cautious perspective on adopting the identity of “feminist.” In the creation of WARN, some members were concerned with how they would situate themselves in the feminist movement. Regarding the women’s movement, WARN members say [about white feminists]: “they would divide us among ourselves in such a way as to leave us colonized in the name of gender equity” (117). WARN was concerned that their goals to maintain culture, challenge sexism, and achieve sovereignty would not be successful in a movement that they considered already colonized. A movement that was not equipped to challenge colonization of Native people could not adequately address the experiences of sexual violence that WARN was concerned about.

WARN’s concerns about Native women’s place in feminism and sovereignty is also addressed in Andrea Smith’s “Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change.” Smith corroborates the previous discussion of WARN and notes that their theoretical perspectives as activists are unique in relation to sovereignty and feminist struggles. Native women in activist spaces don’t have a consensus on what feminism means for them. According to Smith, some women were accepting of feminist identities noting that they didn’t want to limit themselves to other ideas in the world, and that they

understood feminism as having origins in Indigenous histories (118). There were also women who disagreed with this, affirming that they are *American Indian* women, in that order. “We are oppressed, first and foremost, as peoples colonized by the United States of America, *not* as women,” (Smith 117). Furthermore, these women are concerned that feminism’s agenda is just an extension of racist, colonialist mentalities. Smith digs into the complexity of Native women adopting feminist identities to their struggles for sovereignty and social change, articulating the fears that they will be recolonized by white feminists.

Renya Ramirez, a Native scholar, interrogates WARN’s statements at the intersections of gender and race. In “Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: A Native Feminist Approach to Belonging” she supports Andrea Smith’s arguments, noting that calls for Native women to abandon feminist goals in the name of sovereignty are misguided and lack a gendered lens that is crucial to dismantling colonization (24-25). Ramirez challenges Indigenous nationalists to reframe their nationalism to include alternatives to genocidal histories of patriarchy and misogyny. Here again, Native and non-Native scholars reaffirm the centrality of gender-based oppression within efforts to end colonization.

Ramirez also carries this thinking into her arguments on solidarity and feminism in academia. In “Learning Across Differences: Native and Ethnic Studies Feminisms” she contends that Native Feminisms are inherently intertwined with other Women of Color Feminisms (303). Understanding the experiences of Native women as a theoretical base means solidarity with and connections to other feminisms that incorporate a critical perspective on the intersections of gendered and racialized oppression. In addition to this

Ramirez also recognizes that women of various nations “maintain different relations to their particular nation-states,” and even though these women may have reservations towards calling themselves feminists, they are every day women theorizing about their experiences (304). Thus, the motivations to adopt “feminist,” or even “Native Feminist,” as an identity in both activism and theoretical space are not universal, but do show theoretical solidarity with other women of color.

In *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, Choctaw scholar Devon Mihesuah is critical of the conflation of Indigenous women’s organizing as part of a broader feminist movement, which contrasts Ramirez’s perspective of feminist academia’s relationship to Native women. Mihesuah’s concerns primarily address this conflation in academics and research, but also includes critical discussions on activism. Beginning with Mihesuah’s arguments on the usage of Indigenous women’s narratives in academia, she contends that the usage primarily seeks to colonize and to objectify. Because white academics take little care into considering how their research replicates colonized thinking about women of color, they end up generalizing Indigenous women to the point that Indigenous women no longer wish to share their experiences (Mihesuah 7). Despite her criticisms of colonization and academia, Mihesuah does believe that there are ways in which Indigenous studies can be reconciled with feminist academia.

Mihesuah argues that a successful reconciliation is a millennial project, and that this project must be “cautious and deliberate” while also seeking to theorize with and not about Indigenous women and other women of color (4-6). Here, the central task is intentionality in which narratives are produced within feminism. Failing to incorporate



perspectives that deviate from or challenge a generalized experience of women further marginalize women of color and resituate white women as primary benefactors of feminist projects. While there are many causes for which academic projects reproduce colonialist ideologies, Indigenous women's theorizing can be incorporated into and respected within a wider feminist theoretical project as long as their voices and their concerns are not generalized.

### *Self-determination & Sovereignty*

Another concept relayed in literature on Native Feminist theory is the emphasis on self-determination. To acknowledge the violence perpetrated against Native women and to determine the necessary actions to rectify it precede the ability to empower. Scholar Victoria Ybanez contends that with Native women aware of the issues they face on an individual and a community level, this awareness lends itself to both community organizing and ownership over determining what is best for them as marginalized people, which is its own type of sovereignty (59). Both legal scholar Sarah Deer and Native feminist scholar Andrea Smith elaborate on individual and legal sovereignty, noting that they are connected due to the historical context of violence against Native women ("Sovereignty of the Soul" 455, "Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change" 122). Furthermore, when Native women engage in community conversations on their experiences and exercise ownership over what is best for challenging systemic abuses, they engage in empowerment. Thus, acts of self-determination are connected to awareness, ability to frame responses to systemic abuses, and community consciousness on the scope of what women are trying to challenge.

Concepts of self-determination as a feminist practice are addressed in *Undivided Rights* (Silliman et al.). Here, the authors discuss the importance of Native women's self-determination as both important in and of itself, but also as a central factor in achieving sovereignty. They argue that for the Native woman "making the right decisions for herself means that she also makes them for her people, because there is no strong separation between the individual and the society," (Silliman et al. 132). Here, Silliman et al. argue that Native women's choice-making impacts their perception of the "correct path" and is individually motivated but also helpful for the community. Furthermore, the community and the individual are mutually reinforcing because of the close relationship between individual decisions and community involvement to support those decisions. Affirming individual choices with community support illuminates the importance of Native women's experiences in Indian Country, but also in decolonizing and achieving sovereignty.

In *Reproductive Justice: The Politics of Health Care for Native American Women* by Barbara Gurr, self-determination is evidenced in interviews about institutionalized violence against Native women. Gurr notes that within her interviews with Lakota community members, ideas of value performance and historic roots of belonging are intrinsic to cultural preservation (21). This is similar to Silliman et al.'s discussion of the role of individual and community awareness in healing from violence. Embodying virtues that are culturally informed is not universally exhibited (by Lakota people), as "generational differences and shifts in cultural norms" impact community involvement, but it does connect the interactions between individuals, community, and cultural preservation (21). Despite the variety of factors involved in the degree of connection to

the community, Gurr's participants placed high importance on making life decisions informed by their identities as Lakota people. For example, one participant expressed that her determination to survive and be strong in her identity as a Lakota woman was her activism (Gurr 23). This narrative of survival and connection to cultural identity shows the importance of community connection, sovereignty, and individual self-determination as an act of resistance as components of Native feminist theory.

### *Interconnectedness of Violence Against Women*

Beyond the contentions of racial or gender identities and emphases of self-determination, concepts of interconnectedness are also a consistent component of practicing Native Feminisms. The presence of interconnectedness in feminist ideology has many purposes. Identifying the connections between all communities and all experiences serves as a unifying factor for ending gender-based violence and serves as a space to advocate for sovereignty. Furthermore, emphasis on interconnection centers being culturally informed. In interactions between feminist practices and addressing violence against women of color, understanding how colonization has been a motivator for sexual violence is central for drawing the connections between all types of violence.

A foundational text on the connections between types of violence against Native women is *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* by Andrea Smith. In this monograph, Smith traces the impact of genocide through sexual violence from colonization to contemporary violations and argues that sovereignty is a central component to dismantling the lasting systems of settler colonialism. Similarly, legal scholar Jacqueline Agtuca argues that this connection between colonization and current rape epidemics cannot be separated by those who are victims of it (4-5). In addition to

Smith and Agtuca, Mihesuah also comes to the same conclusions, connecting “the loss of land, culture, and loved ones” through deliberately sexualized genocidal violence (41, 48). While the imposition of patriarchy and capitalism as societal structures posed significant challenges to pre-colonial ways of life, both Mihesuah (41) and Smith (8) argue that the construction of Native women as hypersexual, subhuman, and inherently violable compounds the oppression Indigenous women face. Because colonizers intended to abstract land and resources from the New World, people who resided there had to be moved, or preferably eradicated. While serving the initial purpose of genocide for extracting resources, eradicating as many Native people as possible provided a racialized system of social control for which surviving people would be silenced. To further the project of colonial dominance over Native people, generations of those who were silenced were subject to sexual violence in boarding schools, coercive reproductive research and sterilization, and sex trafficking.

Ultimately, Mihesuah’s scope diverges from Smith’s by addressing pre-colonial societies at length. She argues, like Smith, that when colonizers were confronted with sophisticated communities they turned to sexual violence to assert authority and secure resources. Going further, Mihesuah details the lasting effects of exploitation that were not present before European contact including gender-based violence resulting from patriarchy (48-51). Notably, both Smith and Mihesuah argue that patriarchy is instrumental in the oppression of Native communities as a whole.

Non-Native scholar Barbara Gurr’s research places a direct focus on Indian Health Services (IHS) as a locus for which violence against Native women is perpetuated. Gurr’s research indicates that participants saw a connection between their individual self-

determination and preservation of culture in the community, and this perspective is essential to addressing systemic violence against Native women. This is important because the inadequacies of IHS service compounds the weight put on victims and survivors to cope with their experiences (Gurr 75). Frequent situations in which Native women do not receive support for reproductive health, including pregnancies and rape, show that the true concern for women's safety is left to the community itself, rather than institutions that are deceptively constructed as health services. Ultimately, Gurr argues

The failure of the IHS to meet the reproductive health-care needs of Native American women reflects the failure of the federal government to meet basic human rights obligations to Tribal nations...it reflects the neoliberal policies of the United States' nation-building project and its own assumption as the ultimate sovereign within its political borders (35).

This perspective on the intersections of health and sovereignty summarizes the ways in which the federal government uses restriction of services as a means to deny legitimacy of Native women and their safety. In *Conquest*, Smith briefly corroborates Gurr's statement above, connecting "the Indian as an object for consumption" to dehumanization and deliberate medical experimentation and inadequacies (115-117). Thus, institutional violence perpetuated by the IHS serves the purpose of both facilitating genocide and securing sole sovereignty of the federal government through an intersecting web that produces gendered, raced, and classed sexual violence.

### **Anti-Violence Advocacy**

The third body of literature concerns advocacy and advocacy programming. While there are many ways to define advocacy, psychologists Stephanie Townsend and

Rebecca Campbell define it as the “structures, strategies, settings, and direct services of sexual assault programs, which include crisis intervention, counseling by professionals, and medical and legal advice or support” (355). Advocacy work is done on individual, community, state, and national levels, and uses program planning, lobbying, and community education to promote an end to gender-based violence. Similar to the expansiveness of the definition of advocacy, there are also a variety of ways in which feminists program plan and develop methods to put advocacy in practice. In this section, I will discuss the history of anti-violence programs, cultural competence programming, and culturally centered advocacy for Native women.

#### *History of Anti-Violence Advocacy*

The history of grassroots advocacy programming is necessary to address, as it informs the programming decisions of the present. Drawing heavily upon Maria Bevacqua’s *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*, this section of literature historicizes the anti-violence movement and places it in context with concurrent activism and community work by Native American women. Though the two often cross paths, there are also spaces in which Women of Color activism is distinct from the mainstream anti-violence movement.

Anti-violence consciousness predates policy work, program creation, and academic publishing attributed to the “second wave” feminist movement in the 1960’s (Cambell and Wasco 127). Both white women and Black women, as noted by Bevacqua, organized against sexual violence in the US as early as the 1870’s (24). This organizing, which was more often done by separate groups, highlighted a racialized distinction that marks the historical context of rape in the US. While both groups of women understood

the process of sexual violence as a means of patriarchal control, the racializing of sexual violence from chattel slavery to the present day prompted distancing of Black women from the beginning of the women's movement (Bevacqua 25, Bartlett 9).

While social movements (the women's liberation movement) and the movements within a movement (the anti-rape movement) have racial distinctions, there are also political distinctions among them. Regarding claims that Black women weren't invested in anti-rape organizing Bevacqua references scholar Angela Davis, who argues that "the seeming lack of interest had more to do with the framing of the rape issue by white feminists than with apathy on the part of women of color" (39). Beyond the framing of anti-rape movements by white women, Black women and other women of color's involvements were further marginalized by lack of documentation on their participation in the anti-rape movement. Thus, those who laid first claim to the political identity of being anti-rape activist were also those who were given the privilege of being recognized for their work because of their racial identity.

The contentions in feminist philosophies are also seen between liberal and radical feminists. Bevacqua articulates this dichotomy between liberal and radical feminists, noting that while liberal feminists sought out legal reforms and economic equality, radical feminists challenged the efficacy of reforming a racist and sexist capitalist system (28, 57). Out of this difference stems practice of modern anti-violence advocacy: the creation of crisis shelters with programming, a radical feminist contribution, and reforming rape laws and statutes, a liberal feminist contribution (Bevacqua 65). While liberal feminists focused on lobbying efforts, radical feminists quickly took to creating programs for challenging the rape epidemic in the US. Their localized programs, which

started as support and consciousness raising groups and transformed into crisis hotlines and early domestic violence shelters, precipitated the foundations of modern advocacy work.

As anti-violence advocacy has firmly established itself, professionalized itself even, as a national network of feminist organizations, there are distinctions that arise in the types of practice. Bevacqua articulates many different philosophies of rape crisis work, that include direct services to victims or survivors, outreach and formalized procedures for services, internal (or external) education about rape, as well as changing societal understandings of sexual violence (73-75). Because the practice of rape crisis-work stems from localized radical feminist praxis, there is no uniform set of programming or philosophy for rape crisis centers (RCCs). This leads to structural issues that include critiques of the professionalization of anti-rape work, but also to disagreements in how to develop programming that accurately attends to the needs of diverse survivors.

The rape crisis and domestic violence shelters of today are markedly different from their beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s and encounter similar concerns with professionalization and shifting philosophies. Within the state of Minnesota especially, anti-violence advocacy work has been a collaborative effort between “white” advocacy organizations and Anishinaabe organizations. Feminist scholar Elizabeth Bartlett details the ever-changing advocacy environment within Minnesota, and notes that Minnesota’s anti-violence organizing has encountered a trade-off between “older branches of professional women and a younger branch of activists” within the second wave of the feminist movement (6). This is one point in which the philosophical perspective of



advocacy shifted, and as feminist activism solidified within Minnesota, a second shift occurred with the professionalization of advocacy organizations.

In her thesis *Changes in Feminism: A Case Study of CADA House*, Shelley Owen argues that consistent issues in framing violence against women marked the difficulty in coalition work that produced the second shift in philosophy (19-22). “Staff dissension, organizational redesign, and philosophical conflicts” were encountered at multiple organizations throughout Minnesota (Owen 23). This led to multiple organizations adopting less grassroots and more bureaucratic, non-profit, and government-funded approaches. Refocusing accountability signaled a full entrance into the non-profit sector and formalized system-based approaches to anti-violence advocacy, which included but was not limited to the social service concept of cultural competency (Shelley 27).

Criticisms of the shift from grassroots organizing to non-profit bureaucratic responses include lawyer and scholar Dean Spade’s *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, & the Limits of Law* (2015). Though Spade’s primary focus is trans politics and law, his critique of the non-profit complex is similar to advocates working within the state of Minnesota. Spade argues that the new sector of non-profits, funded by both government organizations and wealthy philanthropists, shifts programming and policy from redistribution and transformation to inclusion, incorporation, and the legitimization of dominant systems of control (29). The philosophical and non-profit shifts of advocacy organizing from the 1970s to current times articulate the refocusing of advocacy to bureaucracy-shaped philosophy, which includes an emphasis on cultural competency as a form of programming.

*Cultural Competency Programming*

As a theoretical basis for programming, cultural competency is situated within multiple areas of social services, including education, medicine, social work, and advocacy. Within social work and advocacy, the implementation of cultural competency as a model of care acknowledges a multisystem approach to providing services for diverse clients (Cross et al. 3). Cross et al. address the practice of cultural competency and define it as a continuum of six types of responses service providers have to cross-cultural situations. These include negative and invalidating responses, which is defined as Cultural Destructiveness, to culturally specific supportive responses, defined as Cultural Proficiency. This continuum traces both individual provider skills and can also be attributed to agencies or systems (13-18). Cross et al.'s itemized benchmarks are a useful starting place for which social service organizations can evaluate their incorporation of effective programming for cultural competency.

Cultural competency programming is a way of bridging gaps across difference and within education, the need for culturally competent teachers highlights the issue of insider-outsider status. In "Outsider Teacher/Insider Knowledge: Fostering Mohawk Cultural Competency for Non-Native Teachers", educator Sharon Williams found that even with growing populations of Native students, predominantly white administration and educators were a barrier to education (25). As a result, collaboration between Native and non-native educators produced a culturally competent professional development program, facilitating the achievement of Native students through connections to language and culture. Addressing the multi-system impact of oppression against Native students, culturally competent programming worked to alleviate historical tensions between white and Native communities near Akwesasne (32). While Williams' research on cultural

competency for Akwesasne students is largely unique to the context of New York (where Akwesasne is located), there are two components that could be used for establishing cultural competency programming. Her insight into the barriers of whiteness and tools to address animosity developed from historical tensions serve as a basis for deescalating and digging deep into culturally competent education.

Culturally competent services can also be used beyond challenging historical violence and tension. The model addressed in Williams' research identified the end result of cultural competency as "two-way meaningful dialogue" between white educators and students of color (32). Challenging colorblindness, preferential treatment, and cultural disconnect were included in this process of meaningful dialogue and achieving cultural competency (34). Using the method of Developmental Trajectory of Understanding, white and other non-Native service providers were able to develop their cultural competency from an initial point of limited exposure to Native communities.

Similar to Williams' research, which emphasized community learning and dialogue with the inclusion of Native communities, Brave Heart et al. come to the same conclusions on processes for achieving cultural competency, with an emphasis on recognizing historical trauma. Their research, which addresses racial disparities in effective behavioral health interventions and evidence-based treatment (EBTs), calls for the inclusion of culturally informed and community-partnered action in mental health treatment (26). Brave Heart et al. argue that community involvement and models of intervention created by Native communities should be the primary piece of mental health service provision, as they are culturally-grounded and address racial disparity in treatment (28). Components of treatment that include community involvement,

culturally-grounded resources, and the recognition of racial disparities are all representative of culturally centered advocacy, which can be placed within other advocacy frameworks.

### *Culturally Centered Advocacy*

As the conflicts between feminists of color and white feminists show, cultural competency and understanding of how sexual violence is not just gendered, but also racialized poses a significant discussion in the efficacy of anti-violence programs. Sensitivity to racialized sexual violence and cultural competency are necessary components of providing services for all victims and survivors, especially given that the US government has yet to provide funding from VAWA 2013 for Native women (USDOJ). Without sufficient funding, the future for many domestic violence shelters and RCCs is unclear, and their programming may suffer for it. Thus, the necessity of culturally competent programs that are run by both Native-centered advocacy groups and non-Native groups is heightened.

Native programs and culturally competent non-Native programs have an imperative to address racialized, classist, and colonialist systems in the US if they want to serve people from colonized communities of color (Smith 1, Clairmont and Deer 184). To begin to serve Native women as rape survivors, advocacy programs draw a distinction between societal relationships that are pre-colonization and post colonization. This is addressed in literature from the Native Feminist theory section at length by Agtuca, Gurr, Mihesuah, and Smith. However, this critical reflection of colonization's influence on feminist theory is put into action in advocacy programming. In this case, the advocacy practices of culturally centered organizations place emphasis on maintaining traditional

knowledge and challenging hegemonic systems, as it is central to healing and supporting women of color.

Analyzing the service provider perspective, Mattson addresses complications experienced by Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). Mattson's research concludes that from many organization perspectives, substantial improvements to receiving justice for survivors has not been actualized, and many professionals have become complacent or overwhelmed with the amount of progress that is yet to be made (255). Despite the seemingly never-ending problem of gender-based violence within Minnesota, the implementation of more transformative, inter-organizational task forces may be making (slow) progress to change the framing of sexual assault cases (257). However, Mattson argues that victim advocates were not exempt from the issues, mentioning that their work didn't emphasize alternatives to the criminal justice system as well as they could have (258-259). In all organizations researched, heavy emphasis was put on the criminal justice system as a solution to gender-based violence within Minnesota. Mattson's conclusions reflect that an emphasis on transformative alternatives is needed within advocacy and beyond.

Within advocacy programming, survivor reactions to social systems are a particular area that calls for distinct culturally centered approaches. Patterson et al. address the motivations for non-reporting, which include the severity or conditions of the violence, fear of retaliation, and fear of disbelief by system personnel (127). A majority of the research participants (69%) were women of color and expressed a distinct fear of social systems personnel reporting to and interacting with the criminal justice system, as well as a fear of being caught in the system for reasons not related to their rape (Patterson

et al. 132-133). Their findings suggested that for advocacy programs to reach and support survivors who are women of color, substantial work needs to be done to incorporate distrust of systems into program planning related to outreach.

Regarding Native survivors of gender-based violence, Wahab and Olson look at three distinct spaces for anti-violence and healing work. They note that, similar to Patterson et al., barriers to support for Native survivors include systemic racism, interactions with other government systems/state violence, White-dominated agencies, and cultural or value differences (356). Though this research looks at federal/state services and health service providers as well as community organizations, it suggests that due to aforementioned barriers of support, survivors of gender-based violence have a greater chance of receiving support from community organizations because they are more likely to challenge systems and operate on a liberatory framework.

Renya Ramirez echoes this call for liberatory frameworks in “Healing, Violence, and Native American Women.” She argues that lasting colonial imagery, such as the representation of Native women as sexually promiscuous or dehumanized, produces societal permissiveness of violence against Native women (103). To challenge epidemic of violence against women and the imagery of Native women as inherently violable, Ramirez contends that the framework for healing from violence has to be a cultural approach—one that uses Native, not Eurocentric philosophies and works to dismantle colonial hierarchies (103). She uses the example of the American Indian Holocaust Exhibit as a way of disrupting colonial imagery and placing messages of self-determination, rejecting hegemonic representations and presenting an ideological shift (108-110). The liberatory framework of anti-violence advocacy, according to Ramirez, is

founded on the intentional subversion of colonial narratives, and encourages historically accurate discussions, recovery, healing, and community nurturance.

*Sharing Our Stories* has an exceptionally detailed perspective on anti-violence advocacy that places cultural preservation at its center. This culturally informed program planning starts with addressing the current context of violence against women. As Victoria Ybanez argues in “Domestic Violence: An Introduction to the Social and Legal Issues for Native Women,” to begin to heal from gendered violence, advocacy must be critical of the ways in which legal “solutions” to violence further marginalize Native people (49). Here, the complexity is that culturally centered advocacy must navigate the ways in which serving Native women interacts with decolonizing community responses while fostering healthy community relationships. To address this complex web of community needs, Ybanez uses the terms *cultural abuse* and *ritual abuse* which allow a perspective of intimate partner violence that is not only gendered but raced (51-52). This means that the pervasiveness of sexual violence against is tied to cultural abuses, in which survivors are told that they aren’t Native enough as an attempt to diminish the survivor’s identity as a Native woman, and ritual abuses, where spiritual practices are used as a means of silencing and controlling a survivor’s behavior.

A comprehensive article on the methods for practicing advocacy with emphases on holistic, culturally informed ways is provided by legal scholars Bonnie Clairmont and Sarah Deer in “Introduction to Advocacy for Native Women Who Have Been Raped”. The authors use frameworks of general anti-violence advocacy and apply intersectional perspectives, including the impact of historical trauma in Indian Country. Beginning with a list of myths and facts about violence against Native women, Clairmont and Deer

articulate the reasons behind cultures of silence and distrust in support systems (183-184). In this case, the authors note that Native women often hide their trauma and their experiences because they feel a need to protect their family or honor Indian culture. The shame experienced by survivors is compounded by the effects of systemic racism and colonization. With interviewing practices that affirm these effects on the victim (often called victim-centered advocacy), Clairmont and Deer argue that the final piece is that of social change (188). A world where Native women's experiences are understood and affirmed is only half of the job of culturally centered advocacy. A world that seeks to change the systems of oppression that doubly marginalize Native women is a world where theory and experience informed activism transforms the understanding of colonized sexual violence.

### **Conclusion**

These bodies of literature help to create a theoretical space understanding the relationships between historical contexts, theories on sexual violence and identity, and practicing advocacy. Each of these bodies contribute to feminist analyses of cultural competency in Southern Minnesota.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to explore how anti-violence advocacy organizations use concepts of cultural competency in their programming to service the needs of Native American survivors. The questions I use to guide this study are: (1) Do these anti-violence organizations have cultural competency programming? (2) What services do these anti-violence organizations provide for Native American women? and (3) What are the unique needs of Native American survivors in this area? These questions help to articulate what differs in culturally specific advocacy and allow for a unique analysis of decolonizing responses to interpersonal violence in an area that has a complex history with colonization.

I hypothesized that the anti-violence organizations participating in this study will have limited resources for Native cultural competency, and thus advocates will have varying knowledge of how to incorporate it into their advocacy. This may be due to the forced removal of Native people from Southern Minnesota, but it may also be due to different program planning and training goals. Advocacy programming has no centralized standards, so variability may be high within the state of Minnesota but across the United States as well. The unique political landscape of Minnesota, particularly as a state with more progressive activism, allows for greater involvement of advocacy programming as well as diversity within it. Political and activist beliefs of participants may be diverse, considering the variety of involvement and the differences in colonial impact on communities they serve.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research study is inspired by components of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012). Decolonizing methodologies as a practice is concerned with the "context in which research problems are conceptualized and designed...and is also concerned with the institution of research and its relationships to power" (Smith ix). As this study involves research that addresses the impacts of colonization, it is critical as a researcher to use methodology that acknowledges the historical implications of power and oppression.

Smith (2012) provides several frameworks for ethical research with Indigenous participants and about Indigenous subjects, emphasizing critical theory. Concepts I use to guide my research include the idea of "talking back," researching margins, and decolonizing projects (144, 198, 226). These concepts work well to address the content of my research as well as my relationship to the project and its participants because they target multiple ways for decolonizing work with both participants of color and white participants.

"Talking back" is a concept that Smith uses to articulate Indigenous resistance to systems of power. She argues that when Indigenous people become the researchers, they must be careful to address systems of power and their effects, as well as articulate the sources of knowledge that come up in research (226). I employ a perspective of talking back to see when and where advocates use talking back/talking up to power to challenge hegemonic understandings of the "culture" part of cultural competency, which include stereotypes and misunderstandings that result from self-education.

Similar to talking back, Smith talks extensively about researching the margins and the subsequent validation of subjugated knowledge. Discussing complexities of research and researchers themselves at the margins, Smith argues that framing research and community services around the margins of society illuminates spaces of struggle and raised consciousness (198). Thus, my research takes this aspect of researching margins and seeks spaces in which consciousness of injustices are regained, and silences are challenged. I do this first by the framing of my research, and second by encouraging critical thought in participants. In choosing to research cultural competency for Native women, I address violence at the margins of Minnesotan society. Second, by asking participants to think critically about the unique needs of Native American women, participants can (re)gain their consciousness of injustices.

Finally, Smith diverges from more abstract theoretical frameworks to prescribe a list of measurable methods/benchmarks to doing decolonized work. While Smith offers 25 ways to intervene in hegemonic research, there are several that are guiding this study. Intervening, connecting, and envisioning projects are all frameworks that are incorporated in each step of my research processes.

Intervening calls for challenging and reassessing the systems of power or systems of violence (148). This is incorporated in my purpose, which is to intervene and assess current cultural competency programs. Creating research that facilitates interventions and produces connections is central to the process of gaining knowledge from my participants. From the interview process to the finished product, my intent is for this research to challenge people and connect communities together, which is necessary according to Smith, because it establishes good relations (149-150).

Envisioning projects are also central to this research. Assessing cultural competency programming and illuminating absences and areas for change also means that this research has to be intentional in theorizing a way forward. Visionary research highlights the importance of survival and resistance on a collective scale, stipulating that the project must produce knowledge that is a community focused uplift of the most marginalized members (153-154). In asking participants to think deeply about their own knowledge and knowledge that has been imparted on them, advocates can reapply their reflexive thinking back into their work with Native women and deepen connections that re-center community resistance.

Qualitative practices also guide this research. As Hesse-Biber notes, qualitative research allows for better understanding of the lived experiences of participants and requires the researcher to stay mindful of the power balance of researcher-participant dynamics (254). To understand the experiences of advocates, I employ qualitative research methodology with the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This allowed for subjugated (hidden) knowledge from participants with marginalized identities to be discussed (Hesse-Biber 255). I chose to employ semi-structured practice because this seeks to intentionally return more power in the interviewing session to the participant. While my questions guide discussions, the participant still has control over the knowledge they choose to share, and how they interact with questions.

## **Method**

I completed six individual interviews for this research study. Participant eligibility was determined based on age, employment status, and region. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, a current employee of an advocacy organization in Southern

Minnesota and agreed to be audio recorded. Though this is a small representation of advocacy work within the state of Minnesota, these participants contributed a wide range of knowledge that reflects the experiences they have based on program and community diversity. I used individual interviews because of the sensitivity of research content and because of participants being from the same organization. To further protect the identities of participants, all names have been changed.

### *Recruitment*

I used two strategies to facilitate the recruitment of participants. First, I disseminated recruitment flyers through social media. I encouraged my networks to share recruitment information within personal Facebook pages, as well as Facebook groups. This method allowed for fast and extensive dispersal of my intent to collaborate with advocates. With social media I could reach a variety of people within southern Minnesota, and the recruitment information is easily shared between potential participants. Second, I reached out to student affairs offices on campus to post recruitment flyers. Again, this allowed me to reach out to different community members that student affairs professionals may have connections to. Because there is a close relationship between the student affairs offices and community organizations due to programming and events, this method of recruitment was an additional way of reaching potential participants.

Participants for this study included six advocates. I sent recruitment information along to three separate organizations in Southern Minnesota, all six advocates I interviewed were currently employed at the same anti-violence advocacy organization. I attributed this concentration of participants from one organization to be based off both

initial exposure to my recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) via a co-worker and curiosity for the topic.

### *Data Collection*

The potentially sensitive content of this research involved discussion of racial identity, colonization, interpersonal violence, and advocacy work. These topics highlighted the need for low stress interviewing situations. Choosing individual interviews allowed for the interviews to remain confidential without the possibility of influence from other participants at the same organization. Because the interviews were between one researcher and one participant, I took care to make sure there was a level of comfort and a relaxed environment for participants. To make the process of interviewing more comfortable for potential participants, I encouraged participants to schedule interviews at the time and place of their choosing. I also expressed to them that all answers were respected (see Appendix B: Consent Form) and that I was open to answer any questions on the interview script, following completion of the interview.

I created three objectives based off my research questions for my interview script. These objectives included (1) obtain an understanding of the communities served by advocacy organizations, (2) identify the current and historical context impacting the community the advocate works in, and (3) to understand the prevalence of cultural competency for Native women in advocacy programs and organizations. Questions for the interview (see Appendix C) were organized within these objectives to facilitate conversation and answer my research questions.

I developed objective one to gain insight on the communities advocates interacted with. As the first objective for interview questions, this allowed advocates to discuss the

types of work they did, who they interacted with, and the process for collecting data on race and ethnicity at their organization. Questions under this objective included: How many survivors of violence to you guess you typically serve in a year? and How many (or what percentage of those survivors would you guess are Native American?

Objective two allowed me to be able to see what knowledge participants had regarding the history of Southern Minnesota, and what needs Native American women may have when they seek out advocacy organizations. With this objective, both the sources and the extent of the previous knowledge were addressed, and I was able to see how this applied to advocacy trainings and subsequent employee advocacy practices. Questions under this objective included: How much information about the history of the area was provided to you during your training at the organization? and How much information about modern day concerns for Native women was provided during your training?

Objective three allowed me to see how the organization and individual advocates incorporate mandatory or experience-based training to advocate for Native clients. This objective facilitated conversations on the definition of cultural competence, experience in practicing cultural competence, the extent to which participants were applying cultural competency for Native women, and future steps advocates saw for practicing cultural competency. Questions under this objective included: Are you familiar the concept of cultural competency? What is your definition? Did the advocacy organization you work at provide cultural competency training? and Has meeting the needs of Native American women shown up in any of your employment trainings?

### *Analysis*

For this research study, I transcribed all interviews and analyzed transcript data using descriptive (thematic) coding based off the three research questions (Saldana 70-77). This practice of analysis allowed me to collect insight on themes that appeared in participant responses, but also accounted for the explanatory stories that accompanied those participant responses. Most importantly, this method of coding enabled me to respect the responses of participants by using their own language where possible. Three themes emerged, from funding to embodied whiteness to racialized trauma and its impact on outreach. The results chapter is organized to address these themes, which are organized based on research questions/objectives one, two, and three.

### **Reflexivity**

My interest in this project comes from my passions for advocacy, anti-racist organizing, Indigenous sovereignty, and helping diverse survivors of violence. I am curious to see how the needs of Native survivors are met through advocacy programs, and what employees of those programs think about the trainings they're given. Though I show interest in many of these concepts, I also must address my role in this research. As an academic, I understand that I have a level of privilege that I must remain cognizant of while I collaborate with my participants. I have a bachelor's degree and I am in the process of completing a master's degree, which is a life chance not afforded to many in the United States. However, I believe that my other identities allow for mediation of the privileges that impact this research.

First, I have completed a 40-hour training required by the state of Minnesota to become a sexual assault advocate as a course credit in my undergraduate degree. This



means that I have an understanding of the effort that goes into this work that other researchers may not have. Research participants may feel more comfortable with me because I already have some knowledge about the system they work in. Furthering participant comfort, I believe that my identity as a member of the activist community in Southern Minnesota allowed me to create an interviewing environment that was more comfortable for participants I collaborated with. Ultimately, I believe my position within this research is unique because I do not have experience as an employee of any anti-violence organizations. This limited expectations for outcomes, because I don't know the content in the trainings from this organization, and I am not privy to the programming decisions that happen on an executive and board level prior to interviewing.

I also identify as a métis person and this identity is a discussion on its own. There is a distinct difference between Métis and métis, where Métis refers to a specific nation of mixed Indigenous and European people and métis refers to the general population of people throughout Canada with mixed Native and European ancestry. Those who identify as métis within the United States likely trace their family back to Canada, like me. In this distinction, those who identify as Métis are people who qualify for enrollment in Canada and are a part of an ethnic group occupying multiple regions of Canada ("Who Are The Métis?"). However, even with this difference there are discussions on who gets to claim they are (mixed) Native, in which many tribes are divided on inclusion and exclusion (Hamilton 1). In this case Métis nations are more likely to accept people who are actively contributing and involving themselves in their communities rather than just claiming their identity. Active and intentional participation in community events and activism is a

conscious effort that I make as a métis person, along with acknowledging my relationship to my Native identity.

Studies in which the researcher has a different racial/ethnic identity than participants may prevent some participants from feeling comfortable or may prevent individuals from participating at all. Because I am within the identity groups of both Native American and white, this provides a unique perspective that further allows me to create a space where participants feel that they are understood and that their concerns are represented accurately. In addition, my ethnic identity and activist/community connections allow me to further exemplify my intention to collaborate with participants, rather than do research on them.

## Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which anti-violence organizations incorporate cultural competency for Native American women into programming and services for clients. There were three objectives, including (1) determining the presence of cultural competency, (2) examining its application to Native clients, and (3) addressing the unique needs of Native survivors in Southern Minnesota. In this chapter, I discuss the results of my data analyses and outline the section goals and themes that emerged based on my three research questions. First, I provide demographic information from each participant. Next, I highlight major themes; including: cultural competency programming, barriers to cultural competency programming, and unique needs of Native American women. Within these themes an analysis of the intersections of funding, embodied whiteness, and racialized trauma emerged. I conclude with a summary of results.

Initially, I expected in my hypothesis that advocates would have limited resources for cultural competency for Native women, and that they would have varying understanding of how to incorporate competency into their work. This was true, however, the reasons addressed by participants differed from the possible causes I posed in Chapter Three. The causes I addressed in Chapter Three were based largely on the lack of knowledge of the history of violence against Native women. Following the analysis of interview responses, funding and embodied whiteness also were found to be contributing to a limited focus on racialized and colonized trauma, in addition to historical and contemporary absences.

## **Participants at a Glance**

Participants in this study included six advocates with diverse gender identities, racial identities, and education levels. All but one participant identified as white and all but one participant identified as cisgender women. All but one participant had obtained an internship in advocacy before pursuing it as a career. All participants were in the process of or had completed a bachelor's degree, and three participants were pursuing advanced degrees in a social sciences field. Though there are overarching themes tying participants together, their individual stories provide unique perspectives on advocacy and cultural competency programming for Native American women.

### *Ranae*

Ranae is a white, cisgender woman. Her initial exposure to advocacy occurred as an intern in an advocacy-related program, which inspired her to continue doing advocacy work. She currently works as an advocate within the shelter and interacts with ten to twenty clients a day. She expressed interest in participating because she wanted to learn more about her own advocacy and improve the work she does within Southern Minnesota.

### *Meghan*

Meghan is also white and cisgender. She identifies as a heterosexual woman from a small town. Like Ranae, she also completed internships within advocacy-related programs and this led to her employment as an advocate within the shelter. She has worked at the organization for nearly a year and interacts with ten to twenty new clients a month. She wanted to participate because she wanted to know how to improve her advocacy for Native American women.

*Jesse*

Jesse is a white, transgender man. He came to the organization from a previous job related to anti-violence advocacy. He describes his advocacy as working with clients who want to report, clients who go to court, and clients who do medical exams. In over a year of working at the organization, he estimates that he has interacted with eighty clients a month, or over 1,000 clients in a year. He participated in this study because he felt that advocacy was underrepresented in society and with more research, more people will be interested in doing the work he does. He also wanted to participate because he wanted to hold himself accountable to his work and his cultural competency.

*Lora*

Lora is a white, cisgender woman. She completed an internship within anti-violence advocacy which lead her to seek employment in advocacy, where she had been working in the field for three years. In her position, she works with clients outside the shelter, within the community. She didn't provide a number for how many clients she personally interacts with, but she identified the organization as a whole saw 1,500+ clients within a one-year period. She has expressed a passion for advocacy from an early age and participated because she felt that it was important to hear the perspective of advocates. She wanted to engage in conversations about differences in services for women of different nations.

*Kelley*

Kelley is a cisgender and heterosexual woman of color. She has had multiple interactions with advocacy related areas, which include internships in advocacy and her current employment as a shelter advocate. She has worked in the shelter at her

organization for less than a year and interacts directly with ten to twenty clients a month. She expressed interest in participating because she felt that there is a lack of research on the experiences of advocates, and she would like to know more about Native American women.

### *Bree*

Bree is a white, cisgender woman. She has completed a bachelor's degree within the social sciences and is also pursuing additional education. She has been involved in advocacy for six months, starting with an internship and then working in shelter. She interacts with an average of ten clients a month but believes that that number could be as many as twenty because of the variety of services provided for clients. She wanted to participate because she believes research on advocacy allows advocates to see where they stand and improve services for clients.

### **Cultural Competency Programming**

The first theme in participant responses related to RQ #1 (Do these organizations have cultural competency programming?). Participants were asked a variety of questions about their advocacy, knowledge of cultural competency, their experience with trainings on cultural competency, and their implementation of cultural competency. In this section, I highlight responses from participants that stem from these questions to create a basis for participants' cultural competency.

### *Defining Cultural Competency*

According to Stacks et al., cultural competency is a practice that moves beyond cultural awareness and sensitivity and acknowledges or responds to the experiences of different people and communities (4). This advocacy practice accounts for an individual's

world view and life experiences, which can be shared by others within the same culture. In practicing cultural competency, the advocate must acknowledge the social inequities faced by others as well as recognizing the experiences of people from different cultures. All advocates were able to provide a definition for cultural competency and this definition paralleled their responses in several ways.

Two advocates identified that the expectation to know everything about every culture is unachievable and that there are often barriers to being knowledgeable about different cultures. Three advocates identified the importance of positionality in being culturally competent. Participants were equally critical of some advocate's use of the word "understand" in their definitions. One interviewee's interpretation of cultural competency, which she referred to as cultural responsiveness, also requires advocates to position themselves in their work. She also mentioned that she felt it was important for culturally competent advocates to bridge gaps and provide resources for clients.

The advocates discussed the importance of being aware of their position and identity, saying that cultural competency is not "that point where you're just taking all this information from them [clients] and then speaking about it." For them, competency is gaining knowledge to show respect for a client's lived experiences but being intentional with interactions so that clients can speak for themselves. They also identified that allowing clients to speak for themselves and choose their own path meant it was essential for advocates to be open-minded and aware, without any of their own biases preventing a client from making their own choices. Advocates identified a necessary balance between educating themselves on other cultures and allowing clients to speak for themselves, based on the relationship of their identity to their work and to their clients.

### *Programming Limitations*

Though all advocates were able to define cultural competency and provided similar definitions for it, advocates had mixed perspectives on if they had received some form of cultural competency in their training. Five of the advocates had received cultural competency training from the organization, while one advocate had received cultural competency training elsewhere. Within the organization's training for cultural competency the advocates addressed the limitations of time and structure.

Required by Minnesota statutory guidelines, initial 40-hour trainings are intended to train future advocates for supporting clients who experience sexual violence. This training includes awareness of relevant laws, assisting clients with reporting to police and filing restraining orders, as well as understanding the scope of sexual violence in Minnesota (Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault). As a component for understanding the scope of sexual violence, cultural competency is introduced at a very minimal level; training that includes the "what" and the "why". This includes identifying the components and importance of cultural competency programming (Sexual Violence Center). Three advocates noted that the amount of time required for the initial training was an important factor in limiting the information they received in training. Because the first advocacy training is 40 hours, the training focuses on the basics (the "what" and the "why") for beginning to help clients served at the organization.

As a result of time constraints in the initial training, basic cultural competency training is ongoing. Four advocates identified the initial introduction to cultural competency as general knowledge of cultural competency, but one advocate identified that her cultural competency training addressed specific racial identities. This meant that



subsequent training sessions are a frequently used method of obtaining more awareness of specific cultures on a deeper level.

Advocates remarked that cultural competency was “absolutely important for them” in any way that they received it. Demonstrating that desire for more cultural competency training, Bree stressed the importance of receiving the training at some point within her employment at the organization. She was at a different place in her advocacy trainings compared to other advocates and hadn’t received training for cultural competency with the organization yet. The differences within each advocate’s extent of training on cultural competency was a point of limitation for which the organization’s educational supervision needed better communication with advocates. With this improved communication, all advocates could sufficiently prepare themselves to support clients of color.

### **Barriers to Cultural Competency Programming**

The second theme in participant responses related to RQ #2 (What services do these anti-violence organizations provide for Native American women?). Participants expressed two barriers for cultural competency programming on Native American women. These barriers, funding and whiteness, prevented advocates from branching their cultural competency training to Native women.

#### *Funding*

Funding was one of the largest barriers for advocates learning to be culturally competent for Native women. More experienced advocates discussed this in-depth, as they had a greater understanding of where their organization’s funding came from and how it worked. Both Lora and Jesse talked about the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), a

grant administration office dedicated to training social service professionals and reducing crime, and how they were able to approve or deny funding (Office of Justice Programs).

Lora described this barrier for trainings, saying:

I have to prove that it's [a training relating to Native women] important for me to go to. I think because there are culturally specific organizations close to us, they [funding resources] might see it as "well, that's a training that those employees can go to and you guys can go to a different training." Half of my lack of understanding is because I'm not made aware of trainings, and the second is that I have to be able to prove why I should go to it.

The stress with proving the applicability of trainings and lack of awareness are what compounds the barrier funding creates. The advocates believed that this awareness of trainings and services was one of the most important parts of advocacy and acknowledging barriers.

The advocates identified that they were not receiving specific training about Native women in their initial cultural competency trainings. What understandings were demonstrated above on current issues for Native women came from previous knowledge and supplemental education. One participant mentioned this in her interview when she discussed having to prove why attending culturally-centered trainings were important. Even though the process of attending these trainings was longer, she said she "would still take as many opportunities to learn and to know what services do and don't exist [for Native women]."

Beyond what some of the advocates called the "bare minimum discussions of the intersections of race and gender," advocates addressed that they needed to apply for

specific trainings with additional funding. A story about a former coworker exemplified the struggle of attending these specific trainings:

She's Native and she wanted to go to this conference. She got a grant from the tribe holding the conference. The hotel was paid for, registration was paid for. But she couldn't get funding to attend the whole thing as an employee because it wasn't there. We'll keep doing everything we can but we need as much funding as we can get. We try to stay competent to the best of our resources.

Beyond the former coworker's experience, participants could also attest to the struggle of strategically applying for funding to attend trainings they felt were essential. Jesse had experienced being denied the amount of days he wanted to go to a conference on violence against Native women and had to then strategically argue his case for the sessions he needed to attend the most. Sessions he wasn't able to go to were often trainings that were supplemental to understanding violence against Native women, such as drug and alcohol addiction, child welfare services and family, etc. Despite any restrictions on the kinds of trainings advocates were approved to go to, he and other advocates felt happier knowing that their coworkers and supervisors supported their interests. Both stories about narrowed trainings showed the influence of funding on cultural competency and how the organization is doing their best to work around the barrier. This suggests that barriers to competency trainings are at a funding level above the organization rather than the executives within the organization and, furthermore, that the work of anti-violence advocacy at this organization is shaped largely by social service philosophies of the governmental bodies funding it.

### *Whiteness*

Discussions of whiteness were also present in my interviews with the advocates. Some participants put an emphasis on how their whiteness is an important factor in their advocacy, while others focused on community and client demographics. Both of these components contribute to a multi-level discussion of the barriers whiteness created for cultural competency.

*EMBODIED WHITENESS.* Three participants focused on discussing white identity as a barrier to their advocacy. In describing their personal advocacy environments, advocates touched on the importance of situating their white identity in the work they do. When they practice advocacy, their goal is to work *for* and *with* clients. Ranae argues that because she's white and she's cisgender, the necessity for her to be in tune with what a client needs is greater. Better and more accurate advocacy, to her, meant that she needed to address how her position as a white person may be a site of potential barriers. Ranae carried this practice of addressing her identity throughout the interview, making sure that her perspective was appropriately situated as one from a white advocate. For example, when she was asked why the organization served the number of Native women it did, she said "it depends on who calls us. It could also be something that is systematic, and this is stuff I'm not fully aware of because I'm white." Ranae's introspective discussion on serving diverse women shows a contradiction in how much she understood about herself as a white person and her work as an advocate. While she felt that she wasn't acknowledging her whiteness and the impact it could have on her decisions as an advocate, she was able to determine multiple intersecting causes of lack

of reporting while acknowledging that her identity may have prevented her from having a full perspective.

Other advocates addressed their own whiteness in discussions on barriers in service and surveillance of people of color. In this case, she felt that her whiteness was a fundamental barrier in comprehending the types of violence Native coworkers experienced. Lora shared a story about one of her coworkers participating in a ceremony for Native people and was visibly upset as she tried to understand the police's response to the ceremony. She exclaimed "what group of people haven't white people screwed up?" and tried to make sense of the necessity to respond to a gathering of Native people with militarized force. She noted that she struggled to understand surveillance of Native traditions because it wasn't an experience that she had ever had because her privilege as a white person prevented it. Lora also remarked that she had never worry about her safety when she was celebrating anything. Her perspectives also show that white advocates had to situate their identity while acknowledging that it was a barrier to understanding the lived experiences of people of color.

Other advocates became outwardly frustrated upon realizing how central whiteness was in framing their perspective as advocates. When asked about how much information was provided to her about cultural competency for Native women, Bree said:

I mean, we really did not talk about Native women at all. I think we talked about African American women and Hispanic women and that was it. In terms of diversity beyond white people... My whiteness is showing so bad. It's that self-reflective aspect. I have all these privileges. I didn't have to be taught about white

women experiencing gender-based violence because it was the blanket of it [the training]. Then there has to be this certain lesson that delves into people of color. While Bree felt that she was failing in diversifying her knowledge of sexual assault and domestic violence, she gave several insights that helped herself and could help other advocates looking to address their own whiteness. Understanding the importance of self-reflection on white identity may have been a personal sign that she wasn't doing enough to be culturally competent, but it is a step that she and other advocates identified in their definitions of cultural competency. In addition to the importance of self-reflection, her opinion on the process of incorporating diverse experiences was telling, and it was shared by other participants. With separated trainings on diversity and women of color's experiences, the centrality of white perspectives in other trainings was challenged.

Discussions of white identity also appeared in training and fellow trainees expressed their frustration at the ways in which trainings were administered. Kelley participated in a training with many white students present and she was happy to see them progress and expand their knowledge on how race impacts trauma from gender-based violence. White people expanding their knowledge of institutionalized racism was an important takeaway from her training experience because she associated much of the training to be applicable to her practice of cultural competency. However, Kelley did take up issues with the educational experience of her training. She was frustrated with the choice of film presentation for part of the training because it didn't reflect the diversity of clients served by the organization. Furthermore, Kelley was extremely upset with the differences in treatment of racialized content. Kelly said:

When they show videos of domestic violence or sex trafficking there's always a disclaimer or a trigger warning saying, "this might bring up memories, feel free to step out." But when the film was shown on how racism effects people and how racist our society is still, there was no trigger warning for that. This could bring trauma to someone because for someone I knew it was traumatizing to watch how the system was treating them [the people in the film]. I feel like it's weird that we don't get a disclaimer for that. Is racism still a problem?

Kelley's concerns with whiteness and disregarding triggers for people of color were furthered by her reflection on the structure of training employees. She felt that though the trainings were supposed to be for everyone, they came from a dominant white perspective of advocacy because there are no people of color in administrative roles. While trainings addressed non-white people, to her, the perspective of the educators still framed cultural competency from a white viewpoint.

*WHITENESS & COMMUNITY.* Discussions of white identity extended beyond the organization and into the community and clients themselves. Four advocates expressed that whiteness of Southern Minnesota had an effect on who they interacted with as clients. This, in turn, was posed as a barrier for serving Native women.

Two advocates saw that in their advocacy experience, they were most equipped to help white women. Jesse argued that this was due to the nature of his work in supporting women outside of shelter and the concept of the perfect victim. To him, the perfect victim was a majority (eighty percent) of his clients. They were white, middle class women, with more access to resources than women of color. Women with resources were also women who "wanted to report, to see a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), who want

to use all the systems as ways of dealing with sexual assault or domestic violence.” Jesse argued that because of this notable white population that his organization is aware of the barrier this created and are working to close the gaps in serving communities of color. Jesse’s estimation of his clients is almost representative of the 2010 general population which, in an eight-county area of Southern Minnesota, white people accounted for 94% of the population and American Indian people accounted for less than 1% of the population (Minnesota State Demographic Center).

The barriers whiteness created also had its impact on smaller details. When women in shelter need hygiene products, or are given baskets of resources for themselves, they don’t reflect the diversity of women in shelter. Kelley says

We serve so many different women, and a lot of our hair products are just general use. I’d say they’re more white products, where women of color have certain hair products they’d like to use. Since we’re a nonprofit, we just get donations. I’ve thought about how we get some of those things, as simple as hair products. Maybe we could reach out to more stores. As a nonprofit we’re very limited in resources and what we can do.

Many of the advocates’ reflections show that small adjustments, such as fundraising for different beauty products or adding trigger warnings for racism, and the large adjustments, such as employing more people of color in educational and administrative roles create multiple barriers of whiteness, which have an influence on culturally competent advocacy.



## **Unique Needs of Native American Women**

The final theme in advocate responses related to RQ #3 (What are the unique needs of Native American survivors in this area?). Participants expressed that in addressing racialized trauma and its impact on outreach, there were two causes that created unique needs for Native American women as survivors of gender-based violence. These causes, historical and contemporary, created a lack of outreach to Native women.

### *Racialized Trauma and its Impact on Outreach*

Participants struggled with identifying the place of racialized trauma in domestic violence, sexual assault, and anti-violence advocacy. Participants acknowledged that they 1) didn't know the conditions of how the organization required demographic information, or 2) agreed that knowing someone's race wasn't their first priority in providing support for clients. With these two issues, participants provided different justifications that necessitate a discussion on decolonization of advocacy.

All advocates agreed that making assumptions about someone's race (or gender) was inappropriate and could mean a loss of trust from clients. However, some of the advocates, ones who hadn't worked at the organization very long, weren't sure of their organization's process for obtaining racial/ethnic data. Some of the intricacies of this process of collecting racial data were provided by Bree, Jesse, and Lora. All three advocates started with the disclaimer of not guessing or assuming a client's identity. Following this, Bree notes that "outreach usually doesn't ask, but if it gets brought up in conversation they [the advocate] will note it." Lora provides more clarity to the conditions of obtaining racial identity data, saying "when race does come up in my job,

it's when I do police reports or through protective orders." Shelter followed suit with the process of adding racial identity information by self-disclosure.

When asked about what specific services were offered for Native women, Ranae acknowledged that though the advocacy organization was great at recognizing the different needs of different cultures, they weren't actively doing anything for Native women. This is despite two advocates' calculations of the organization serving thirty (two percent) Native women in 2017. This was alarming to the advocates who had interacted with Native clients, as they argued that they felt that they were not as experienced at addressing the larger scope of racialized violence against Native women. With thirty women receiving services from advocates who don't feel comfortable with their knowledge, the gaps in trainings are self-disclosed. This is an important identifier of intent and impact, as advocates intended to help Native clients as best they could, but the impact was that they felt they weren't doing the best that they could despite using the extent of their resources.

*HISTORICAL CAUSES.* I asked advocates about their knowledge of the history of Southern Minnesota, and if it had been addressed in any advocacy trainings. The answer was a resounding no from all advocates. However, previous knowledge was much more extensive. Participants discussed varying levels of previous and self-directed education on the history of the area they currently worked in.

All advocates were able to identify some component of historical violence against Native people as a unique experience impacting a client receiving services from an advocacy organization. One advocate, Jesse addressed differences in experiences for Native women in Southern Minnesota versus other areas of the state. Jesse was the only

advocate to address reservations in his interview, as some of his clients were directly from Northern Minnesotan reservations. He connected the history of abuses against Native people to the current isolation of Native women seeking resources to escape gender-based violence. He argues that the lack of supports for women reflected multiple institutions “coming down on them” and left Native women with the choice of moving to an area far away from home to receive resources, or to try to get help at inadequate shelters close to home.

All participants identified the US-Dakota War of 1862 and the Dakota 38 as the defining part of Native history in Southern Minnesota. This emphasis on the Dakota 38 as a defining historical event demonstrated one space where participants were focused on experiences that not all Native people in Minnesota shared. Four advocates were able to provide more specific information while two knew very basic information on historical causes of violence. This divide was due in part to collegiate education versus elementary education and family introduction to the topic, as well as ability to differentiate diverse experiences of Native people within their work as advocates.

Jesse, who had learned from growing up in the area as well as being college-educated, argued that commemoration of the events and forgetfulness from white people were not enough to begin to prevent further harm to Native people in the area. Lora, who had taken classes on people of color, addressed the history of Minnesota beyond forgetfulness. She connected current anti-Native sentiments with both a lack of knowledge of the history of Southern Minnesota and intentional suppression of that history. Two other advocates learned about the history of Southern Minnesota from

Social Sciences classes and, similar to Lora and Jesse, took that into account when reflecting on why Southern Minnesota has less Native people.

In direct relation to cultural competency training, all advocates identified a connection between lack of Native clients and the history of Southern Minnesota. Bree candidly remarked “America has kind of alienated Native women so they don’t necessarily trust to come to people who could help them.” She poses the rhetorical question: would you come to people who haven’t had the best track record with you?

Even with awareness of the history of Southern Minnesota for Native women, two participants noted that barriers and limitations changed the way they interacted with Native clients. When Jesse discussed the ways he implements culturally competent advocacy, he acknowledged that he wasn’t able to completely hone in on what resources he needed to make available until he had worked with Native women. With more trainings available to him he believed that advocates would have more success at bridging gaps between learning how to be intersectional or culturally competent and showing that in interactions with clients.

Two advocates addressed the connection between comprehensive education on Native women’s experiences and practicing advocacy work. These advocates felt that because they hadn’t worked with Native women during their time as an advocate, they felt that they didn’t need to look up resources. Despite having some level of training on helping Native clients, advocates were still waiting until they directly interacted with a Native client to figure out what background knowledge they should have. This self-education component, based on experience with clients first and education second, is a complicated situation for advocates to be placed in. First, like Linda Smith encourages in

*Decolonizing Methodologies*, this fosters collective learning and affirms the voice of the Native client (149). However, in *The Beginning and End of Rape*, Deer argues that the onus of education being placed on Native clients can serve as both an extension of colonialism and works to silence and disempower (112). As a result, self-education on racialized trauma is a delicate balance of community work, client empowerment, and acknowledgement of colonial extensions of power.

*CONTEMPORARY CAUSES.* When asked why Jesse thought he served the number of Native American women he did, he addressed multiple current struggles Native women face. Jesse believed that a majority of women seeking help find his organization because of community and inter-agency awareness, as well as simple internet searches. His clients receive referrals to his organization, and he also interacts with women who are connected via word of mouth. On current issues for Native women, Jesse says:

I just went to a conference not long ago. We know how bad sex trafficking and sex work is for Native women. The numbers are ridiculous. You look across the board compared to other races and Native women are at the top. The cases [of Native women] I've worked with were domestic violence related. We're not reaching the Native women who are being trafficked or the women using sex work for survival... I can remember all my Native clients. Those cases are the ones that keep me up at night, because the violence was so, so bad. The violence is so escalated. It's shit that will keep you up at night. How is it that the ten Native clients are the ones who have impacted me the most?

Jesse's understanding of contemporary issues was tied to both his previous training experience, as well as his actual interactions with Native clients, and the severity of the current violence was leaving a larger impression on him than other types of violence to white clients.

Advocates spoke to the close relationship their organization has with law enforcement, and how that relationship impacted what skills they used to help their clients of color. Jesse connected the proximity to law enforcement with the large number of white clients and white advocates and argued that this was because of the emphasis on using "the system." Ranae and Lora also addressed this issue in direct relation to their lack of interaction with Native clients and other clients of color. Ranae commented "It's more people of color who have a hard time reporting because there's a lot of different layers to things. It's intersectionality if you will," which she followed with a discussion on who is more likely to call the police. Lora addressed similar issues, stating:

I would say a large majority [of clients] are referrals. Almost 90% of our referrals are from law enforcement, which is something that I didn't know. So if you look at somebody who is Native disclosing and reporting to law enforcement...there's a lot of barriers. I don't have to be Native to know that she's [a Native woman] is going to be treated different than me. Systems are geared towards privileged people. [As an organization] we're trying to be more creative about how to have resources and referrals in other areas and promote trust within the community outside of that system.

Jesse, Lora, and Ranae identified that the connections between systems of oppression impacted the amount of people of color they saw, but also how they ended up interacting with Native women.

Advocates are aware that a lack of discussion on race and gender-based violence promoted noticeable gaps in serving Native clients. Lora, Kelley, and Bree believed that the lack of interaction with Native women was due to inadequate outreach. Bree said she didn't know if she did the outreach necessary to reach Native women, and Lora held similar sentiments saying:

I think that in terms of the number of clients we serve from many different populations, some are less than others, specifically Native American women. I think our numbers are low and I don't think it's because violence isn't happening in that community. I think it's because of outreach.

The advocates knew that their outreach was not where they wanted it to be, but they also were actively contemplating which ways they could begin to reach out and close that gap, as in Lora's examples.

For closing gaps in outreach and ending violence against Native women, some advocates thought that their lack was because of the increase in Native-specific advocacy programs. Meghan and Kelley believed that though their organization didn't turn anyone away, they didn't know current issues for Native women and see many women at the organization because there were places better suited to support Native women. While there are many organizations within the state of Minnesota that are by and for Native people, gaps in serving Native women won't be completely closed. Responses from other

advocates demonstrated that collaboration with these organizations is necessary to maintain cultural competence, nonetheless.

### **Summary of Results**

Participant responses followed several themes relating to three initial research questions. First, participants had learned cultural competency, though they differed in the extent and location of their cultural competence training. They were able to identify several components of culturally competent advocacy, which included acknowledging lived experiences, recognizing social inequities, and providing culturally responsive resources. Participants also addressed limitations within general cultural competency programming, which included the structure and lack of time in trainings.

There were two significant barriers to implementing cultural competency for Native American women. Both funding and whiteness prevented advocates from achieving the level of cultural competency they desired. Funding sources created a difficult process for applying to attend subsequent trainings (including trainings for violence against Native women). This pressured advocates to prioritize trainings they wanted to attend or cut down the number of days of training they wanted to attend. Whiteness was a barrier to cultural competency for Native women in two ways. First, because advocates felt that their whiteness prevented them from being able to acknowledge their clients' lived experiences. Second, because of a predominantly white community in Southern Minnesota, their advocacy is focused on women who are non-Native.

Finally, participants reflected on the unique needs of Native American women in Southern Minnesota. These concerns for violence against Native women were both



historical and contemporary. Historical causes included animosity towards and suppression of Native people after the US-Dakota War of 1862. Contemporary causes relating to the unique needs and lack of outreach included interactions with police and lack of reporting. In the case of both historical and contemporary causes, participants noted that much of their knowledge was from self-education outside of their employment. Some advocates had engaged in what they considered trainings with minimal information about the experiences of Native women. Identifying the unique needs of Native women experiencing violence lead to participants determining that they lacked in outreach for racialized trauma.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This study examined the incorporation of cultural competency programming for Native women by an advocacy organization in Southern Minnesota. Using decolonizing methodologies as a framework, I assessed the presence of cultural competency and the services provided for Native clients at the organization, as well as the unique needs of Native women in Southern Minnesota. In this Discussion chapter, I discuss research implications, address study limitations, and I conclude with suggestions for decolonized advocacy and future research.

Results from Chapter Four bring forth implications for researching cultural competency and advocacy. All advocates expressed different levels of education on cultural competency and, in addition, they demonstrated different levels of experience in incorporating knowledge about the experiences of Native survivors in their cultural competency. In this section I discuss the connections between whiteness, funding, and racialized violence.

This study illuminated how whiteness, funding, and aspects of racialized violence intersected to prevent advocates from being comfortable in their ability to advocate for Native women (Bevacqua 73, Owen 57-62, Spade 2-5). Participants stressed an intense desire for extensive and consistent trainings, which was supported by supervisors, while the interactions between funding and whiteness framed the extent to which they were able to be culturally competent for Native women. In the context of research on advocacy, this finding is significant because research on the evolution of advocacy posits several funding issues, which included the processes of obtaining and keeping funding (Macy et al. 4, Townsend and Campbell 355).

Participants also reflected on whiteness in the community they served, which was a direct connection to reasons that were provided for the denial (or partial denial of funding). The assumptions of communities served at the organization by funding resources framed the space for which advocates were able to educate themselves on racialized violence. Research addresses multiple issues of differences in organizational philosophy, and how funding frames the conversation. As in the case at this organization, funders had significant weight in determining the avenues for fulfilling cultural competency program philosophies.

Findings shed light on the disparities that result from controlling content of trainings. This control over the content of education lead some advocates to depend on their previous knowledge of Native women. Previous education, coupled with occasional OJP-approved trainings, increased disparities in understandings of racialized violence. This suggested that the burden of awareness was placed on the individual more so than the organization and situated advocates with education in social sciences more favorably than an advocate without standardized education. As an additional concern, the control over content in the trainings for advocates lead to disparities in knowledge from advocate to advocate. These disparities contribute to misunderstandings of Native women's experiences, as they reinforce colonial understandings of Native history (Ramirez, "Healing, Violence, and Native American Women" 103). Additionally, research on racialized violence against Native women suggests that the burden of misinformation can be diminished with the investment in education by Native women and interrogation of embodied whiteness (Deer 158; Mihesuah 4, 143; *Conquest* 137). Advocates were careful of the balance between banking on their previous knowledge and letting clients speak for

themselves, which, in practice, meant that they didn't know how to help Native clients until they worked with them.

Despite participants feelings of despondency, they expressed measurable objectives for improving organization-wide cultural competency. Components of the "Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects," which Linda Smith proposes as a mix of methodological approaches and Indigenous practices, highlight spaces for which cultural survival, healing, and restoration are engaged (143-164). These methodological approaches and Indigenous practices, coupled with trauma-informed and culturally competent advocacy make a basis for decolonizing advocacy. In the following sections, I formulate goals for advocacy programs that are based on participant responses and Smith's Indigenous projects and work towards a goal of decolonizing advocacy for Native women.

#### *Addressing History & Decolonization*

Because this thesis grew to focus on advocates and their understanding of their work, an important component of their progress as culturally competent advocates is addressing history. This education happens within colonized and decolonized contexts. All participants acknowledged some awareness of the history of Minnesota, yet they were concerned that their education had clouded the reality of Native people's experiences. Feminist scholars, like Andrea Smith in *Conquest*, argue that a comprehensive understanding of history and the context of genocide are the first components to serving Native women (154). In this sense, decolonized education is not only understanding geographical history, but the implications of power within the content taught and the subsequent services provided for Native women. For example, Smith discusses the

impulse to resort to offering police services to Native clients. However, with decolonized education provided by Native educators, an advocate can better understand the current potential for revictimization, the community-specific histories of state violence, and the reality that Native women carry the burden of historical consequences (Smith 155, Ybanez 61). In this way an advocacy organization can respect the communities they interact with by centering their voices, funding their envisioning projects, and begin to dismantle systems that prevent Native women from receiving help.

#### *Acknowledging “The Gap”*

“The Gap” in outreach was coupled with lack of training and was identified by participants as a disparity in helping women who were at the margins of society because of institutional violence, historical trauma, and location. By placing emphasis on Native women to analyze cultural competency in advocacy programming, advocates reflected on causes for marginalizing them within their work.

The concept of illuminating spaces at the margins required critical thought on the way in which current processes of advocacy were not sufficient for serving all clients. As advocates addressed, around 2% of clients were Native, which meant that 30 survivors were receiving support that may not have addressed the totality of their experiences. Advocates used the best of their knowledge, which they self-identified as not enough, and provided examples at length for how women at the margins were not being represented in multiple areas of their organization.

#### *Intersectional Trainings*

This visionary reflection on intersectional training by advocates facilitates the forward movement towards decolonization that Linda Smith argued for (153). Advocates

acknowledged how their trainings marginalized Native women by excluding their voices, but believed intersectionality was already a fundamental component of advocacy. By restructuring trainings to include the intersections of race and gender-based violence, they can reorient their education processes to fit their goals of becoming culturally competent and prepared to assist Native clients.

Advocates also determined the spaces they were lacking in (historical recognition and current awareness) and determined that the process in which they received training was a space that could be improved. Theorizing absence, coupled with theorizing an inclusionary future motivated them to consider the ways they push themselves beyond understanding “black and white” racial dynamics.

The addition of curriculum on colonization and the absences it creates is essential to informing advocates on historical violence, as well as the current state of violence against Native women. Scholars cited in my literature review address the context of racial trauma and violence against Native women at length, and these are valuable texts to serve as a starting point for an advocate reading on their own or looking to create an educational program. Texts and other materials distributed by Paula Gunn Allen, Andrea Smith, Sarah Deer, and Devon Mihesuah can widen the scope of working at the intersections of gender-based violence and colonization.

Recognizing that knowledge is situated within a society that privileges some experiences over others opened the advocates up to the potential for a decolonized advocacy framework. After intervening in dominant narratives of gender-based violence and creating space for Native experiences within trainings, advocacy organizations can

begin to widen the concept of decolonizing frameworks, asking “What makes our training intersectional *and* decolonized?”

### *Training Requirements*

As the flexibility of 40-hour certification trainings limits in-depth discussions on cultural competency for any racial or ethnic groups, advocacy organizations may have to resort to other options to encourage increased awareness of Native women’s experiences. Some of the advocates noted that the overload of information within the initial trainings prevented them from retaining extra information on applying foundations of cultural competency.

Options that acknowledge this overload and advocate burnout include actively seeking out trainings and bargaining with funding sources for cultural competency trainings. Some advocates have been doing this as an unintentional practice as a means to do whatever possible to support clients of color. Applying this process works intentionally to encourage advocates out of easier to access trainings and to establish connections to other programs that have expertise in subject areas the organization is seeking out.

### *Employment & Retention*

Employing Native advocates at the organization is another solution I suggest to intervene in a system of trainings with narrow focus. Seeking employees with diverse lived experiences differs from the other suggestions in that it is not solely a decision made by the individual advocate or the organization itself. It takes time, allocation of resources, and creating an environment in which the Native advocate is given space to challenge practices that come from hegemonic understandings on how to run anti-

violence advocacy organizations. Even at that intentional change in climate (in some cases advocates called it their organization's perspective, culture, or environment), it is up to Native activists and advocates to choose to apply for job openings.

Native advocates—future or past employees—can't and shouldn't be expected to be a spokesperson for all Indigenous experiences, as each advocate provides a different counter-story to their advocacy in a colonized state. However, if the counter-stories of Native advocates and other advocates of color are centered in programming and these advocates take charge of that programming, more clients will be served in ways that address the totality of their experiences.

#### *Fostering Community Connection*

Smith's discussion on the practice of community connection is also central to the process of implementing cultural competency for Native women (157-158). These community connections enable women who are marginalized by racialized violence to receive help within a larger network of advocacy committed to ending colonization and gender-based violence. In the process of seeking out trainings for advocates and employing cultural competency for Native women, education flows from a starting point, and that necessitates connections to Native communities. These can't be separated if advocacy organizations want to help Native women in a way that doesn't recolonize their healing.

Engaging in community and inter-organization relationships may be one of the easiest ways to initiate cultural competency at an organization, as it is not necessarily bound to time constraints, like attending trainings and seeking out employees are. If the process of referrals from reservations and other predominantly Native communities are to



continue, establishing relationships in good faith with community organizations in those areas or across the state of Minnesota needs to be included in the decolonizing of cultural competency. Establishing community and inter-organization support can begin with referral sites, with former clients, or with connections made at conferences and additional training events.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

This research study came with several limitations, including representation, sample location, scheduling and time constraints, and the extents of cultural competency. The original goal of this research was to recruit participants from multiple advocacy organizations throughout Southern Minnesota. However, the sample of participants for this study were employed at the same location. This is a limited representation of advocacy perspectives within the region of Southern Minnesota. Future researchers should account for more time within their recruitment period if they are seeking participants from multiple organizations.

Second, the sample for this study is within one region of Minnesota. Perspectives of advocates across different regions of Minnesota may differ, especially considering the diversity of relationships with Native communities. Each tribe's interactions with the state of Minnesota are unique and future researchers should take this difference into account when completing regionally-based research.

Third, scheduling and time constraints impacted the sample size. My goal was to recruit 5-10 advocates as participants for this research. However, it was difficult for potential participants to find time to complete an interview. This was due to the expected

time commitment of sixty to ninety minutes. Expanding the data collection period would have allowed participants more options for interview times.

Because this was a small sample of advocates, research with a larger representation of advocates could be incorporated, or employees at multiple levels could be interviewed. Beyond the sample size of Southern Minnesota, a state-wide analysis could be employed, interviewing advocates from multiple regions of the state to determine differences in cultural competency for Native women on a regional basis. Expanding research could also analyze the interactions between Native and non-Native advocacy programs to articulate the effectiveness of services for Native women in multiple geographic areas.

Finally, the limits of cultural competency itself should be discussed. In *Conquest*, Smith discusses cultural competency at length and argues that while many organizations fail by way of expecting women to explain their whole culture in “30 minutes or less,” cultural competency can be successful when advocates are accountable “not to those in power, but to those who are powerless” (152). Some scholars, such as Townsend and Campbell argue that the application of cultural competency for Native clients is necessary given the shift from core services to comprehensive services, or services that go beyond meeting immediate crisis needs (361). However, other scholars are critical of the feasibility of reaching an end goal of a fully competent organization. Lockhart and Mitchell argue that acknowledging the long-term commitment and effort required focuses the organization on the process of cultural competence rather than an end point (8). Thus, while cultural competency doesn’t have an end point for advocates to achieve, the

process of incorporating new skills and connections with community members should be the consistent benchmarks for advocacy organizations.

### **Implications**

This study is a resource for advocates, activists, survivors, and funding and implementation services. Findings suggest that while cultural competency is being implemented at this organization, barriers create inconsistencies in knowledge from advocate to advocate. Participants provided extensive knowledge on the difficulties of implementing cultural competency and elaborated on their future goals within the organization. While practicing advocacy varies person to person, the experiences of these advocates provide a basis for making progress on expanding culturally competent services.

Participants also provided insight on their understanding of colonization and its impact on Native women. They recognized the complicated and violent colonial history of Minnesota, as well as that history's lasting impact on gender-based violence. While extent of their knowledge varied, their desire to push themselves to learn more about Native women's experiences shows an encouraging future for culturally competent advocacy and organization collaboration.

**APPENDIX A: Recruitment Flyer**

# Seeking participants

*You are invited to participate in a research study!*

**The purpose of this research study (MSU IRBNet ID#: 1180555) is to explore cultural competency for Native American women at anti-violence advocacy organizations in Southern Minnesota.**

You are eligible if you:

- Are 18 years of age or older
- Are a current anti-violence advocate in Southern Minnesota
- Agree to be audio recorded

Interviews are 60-90 minutes in length and will be audio recorded

For more information contact:

Alissa Shape, Graduate Student in Gender and Women's Studies  
at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [alissa.shape@mnsu.edu](mailto:alissa.shape@mnsu.edu)

This study is done under the direction of:

Dr. Shannon Miller, Chair of Gender and Women's Studies  
at Minnesota State University, Mankato

[shannon.miller@mnsu.edu](mailto:shannon.miller@mnsu.edu)

MSU IRBNet ID#: 1180555

## APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Consent Form  
MSU IRBNet ID #: 1180555

### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study involving an audio recorded interview to discuss topics related to anti-violence advocacy and cultural competency. This study (MSU IRBNet ID#: 1180555) attempts to collect information about cultural competency for Native women by Minnesotan advocacy programs.

The process of data collection for this study will begin with the Student Principle Investigator going over this consent form with you. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records before the Student PI starts reading the consent form with you.

You will be made fully aware that you are being audio recorded with a digital voice recorder borrowed from the library and that you consent to be recorded. You will, in signing the consent form, affirm that you are comfortable with the recording and with the Student Investigator transcribing those recordings. The purpose of recording this interview is to transcribe the conversation and the purpose of transcribing this interview is to allow the Student P.I to revisit your answers. The audio recording and transcription will be stored on an encrypted flash drive. You are free to stop the recording at any time and have the right to have those records destroyed.

You will be asked if you have any questions and will be reminded that your participation is voluntary and that confidentiality is guaranteed before you sign the consent form. If you volunteer to participate in the interview, you will sign the consent form. The principal investigator will keep this form. The consent forms and the encrypted flash drive with the audio recordings and transcriptions will be retained for 3 years before being destroyed.

Once the consent form is signed and collected, you will begin participation in an audio recorded individual interview. You will be participating in an interview which will be guided with a set of 15 questions to facilitate conversation. The interview will last for approximately one hour and no longer than an hour and a half. Once the interview has finished, you will have the opportunity to ask the Student P.I. any questions pertaining to the research study.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may stop at any time.

The risks encountered as a participant in this research study are not more than any experienced in everyday life. However, you may experience some discomfort discussing the content of the trainings at the place of your employment. There are no direct benefits for your participation. Society may benefit by the increased understanding of anti-violence advocacy.

All data obtained from you, including the consent form, audio recordings, and transcriptions, will be kept confidential. Maintaining confidentiality of information collected from research participants means that only the investigator(s) can identify the responses of individual subjects; however, the researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone outside of the project from connecting individual subjects with their responses. The data will be stored in a locked file

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

██████████ Consent Form  
MSU IRBNet ID #: 1180555

cabinet in a locked office on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus for 3 years. At the end of those 3 years, the audio recordings, the consent form, and transcription will be destroyed.

Please remember that all opinions are welcome and respected in this interview. You may leave the session for any reason at any time. There is no direct compensation for your participation in this research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the option to respond to any of the questions. You may stop participation in the interview at any time by leaving the room.

The decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

If you have questions regarding this study (MSU IRBNet ID#: 1180555), you may contact the principal investigator Dr. Shannon Miller at [shannon.miller@mnsu.edu](mailto:shannon.miller@mnsu.edu).

If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

**If you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. The Student P.I. will keep one copy and you will keep the other copy for your records.**

My initials indicate that I have been told that this interview is being audio recorded. \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Interview Script

Interview Script  
MSU IRBNet ID#: 1180555

### INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Introduction: My name is Alissa Shape, and I am a graduate student in Gender and Women's Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Thank you for choosing to participate in this research study. I am interested in seeing how advocates at Minnesotan anti-violence organizations use cultural competency to understand Native American women's experiences with violence. Please feel free to answer these questions in a way that you see fit. Take your time, and you do not need to respond to any questions you don't feel comfortable with answering.

First, what about this study made you want to participate? How do you identify yourself demographically?

Objective 1: Obtain an understanding of the communities served by advocacy organizations

1. How would you describe your advocacy context and environment?
2. Do you know if your organization requests demographic information for survivors during intake? Is it different for people coming into a shelter or for those who are receiving other types of help from advocates?
3. How many survivors of violence do you guess you typically serve in a year? (This can be how many clients you see in a year or how many people are served by the entire organization.)
4. How many (or what percentage) of those survivors would you guess are Native American women?

Objective 2: To identify the current and historical context impacting the community the advocate works in.

5. Why do you think your organization serves the number of Native American women it does?
6. How much information did you know about the history of the area prior to your employment as an advocate?
7. How much information about the history of the area was provided to you during your training at the organization? How much information about modern day concerns for Native women was provided during your training?

Objective 3: To understand the prevalence of cultural competency for Native women in advocacy programs and organizations.

These questions are about your previous knowledge of cultural competency:

8. Are you familiar with the concept of cultural competency? What is your definition? If you are not familiar with the term cultural competency, here's an example of cultural competency from Advocates for Youth.

Cultural competence moves beyond "cultural awareness" (knowledge of another cultural group) and "cultural sensitivity" (knowledge as well as experience with another culture). Cultural competence acknowledges and responds to the unique worldviews of different people and communities. The way an individual views the world comes from her/his life experiences, many of which are shared by others within the same culture. To understand the individual, one must understand these experiences. Besides recognizing



██████████ Interview Script  
MSU IRBNet ID#: 1180555

cultural patterns of behavior, the culturally competent person must also acknowledge the social inequities faced by others.

9. Did the advocacy organization you work at provide cultural competency training?
10. If your organization provided this training, why do you think it was structured in the way it was?
11. Did this cultural competency training, or any other trainings provided by the organization include information on how to assist Native American women?
12. Has meeting the needs of Native American women shown up in any of your employment trainings?

These questions are about your application of cultural competency as an advocate:

13. Have you encountered situations where diversity skills from trainings are applicable to the survivors or victims you are meeting with? In other words, how often do you feel that you are engaging in advocacy that uses specific training for helping diverse women?
14. As an advocate, have you thought about or worked determine what resources are useful to Native women who are survivors of violence?

Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about? We've reached the end of our interview questions.



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