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# Beyond the Surface: An Analysis on the Journalistic Reporting of Native American Issues

Nicole Dorothy Irene Scott  
ndsfsp@rit.edu

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Rochester Institute of Technology

School of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Beyond the Surface: An Analysis on the Journalistic Reporting of Native American Issues

by

Nicole Dorothy Irene Scott

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in partial fulfilment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technology

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The members of the Committee approve the thesis of  
Nicole D. Scott presented on October 17, 2016.

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Andrea Hickerson, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Director  
School of Communication

---

Andrea Hickerson, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Director  
School of Communication  
Thesis Advisor

---

James Myers, Ph.D.  
Associate Provost  
International Education and Global  
Programs  
Thesis Advisor

---

Grant Cos, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Communication  
Director of Graduate Programs  
School of Communication

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My parents pressed two important teachings upon me: The importance of introducing myself in the Diné (Navajo) language and the power of prayer. I start this paper with that introduction, in order to establish kinship with the readers. I also start by thanking God, the Creator, for being my source of comfort and strength throughout my lifetime, but most importantly through these last three years.

This paper is dedicated to my elders, those alive and those who have passed. You have been through so much and it is due to your strength and adversity that I stand here today. I have admired you throughout my lifetime. I saw how you rose with the sun and began with a morning prayer. I have long admired your laugh lines, and emulated my own laugh from yours. I witnessed how you cared for everyone and were generous even when you had little to give. As a young girl, there were many times when I fell asleep listening to you speak in our Native tongue. I took each moment and each teaching for granted. Today, as I am falling asleep, there are times when I can hear your voices and it brings me peace.

I thank my parents - Denise & Nathaniel, my sisters - Bryana, Ashley, and Natasha, and my brother - Denim. Thank you for allowing me to move across the country and have this journey. Through it all, your love and support was constant. To my nephews- Josiah, Eli, & Ryan: I do this work for you. I believe that I can help make your future a better one. I love you all very much. I thank my friends, students, and colleagues. Thank you for your words of encouragement, for the laughs, and the hugs. To my advisors, Andrea and Jim, thank you for helping me organize these thoughts and words so that I may find my voice and share this story.

*Ahéhee'!*

## Table of Contents

Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Purpose of Study	8
Chapter 1: Adversity, Perseverance, & Transformation	10
Chapter 2: Context of Study	28
Chapter 3: Method & Results	32
Chapter 4: Discussion	40
Chapter 5: Moving Forward	44
References	45

BEYOND THE SURFACE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE  
JOURNALISTIC REPORTING ON NATIVE AMERICAN ISSUES

Nicole Dorothy Irene Scott

School of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

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Abstract

This study analyzes the reporting of four issues that have impacted the Native American community. The research begins by addressing historical events that transformed Native American identity and have shaped the media's representation of Native identity. Framing theory, muted group theory, and tribal critical race theory support this study, with framing theory focusing on examining the news discourse. This study seeks to identify how Native American issues are framed differently in *Indian Country Today Media Network* and the *New York Times*, and seeks to identify if the Native voice can be heard in articles written by Native journalists. The results of this study suggest that the sources were the most significant difference between the articles by ICTMN and the NYT. Sources also were the key element in hearing the Native voice.

*Keywords:* Native American, Indigenous, identity, storytelling, voice, Indian Country Today, New York Times

### Beyond the Surface: An Analysis of the Reporting of Native American Issues

In an op-ed for the Huffington Post, Navajo postdoctoral scholar and a personal mentor of mine, Dr. Amanda Tachine, wrote an open letter to Native American college students, stating:

We as Native peoples have gone through much adversity, and yet we have persevered. I think it's because we have the ability to transform the negative into positive. We all have 'monsters' that surround us, but transformation is in our blood. It's the belief that we have to move forward, for our people and future generations. (2015, para 13)

Today, Native American communities are experiencing high levels of unemployment, low college enrollment/completion rates, high levels of suicide, domestic violence, drug and alcohol usage. There are as many stories about Native Americans that seek to uplift the community, as there are stories that tell of the critical state of Indian Country and are reminders of the long term effects of colonialism. Together, both types of stories weave a much larger story demonstrating the adversity and perseverance that Dr. Tachine refers to. A story of people who are moving forward and working to move away from the negative images and stereotypes that continue to plague their identity. Native Americans are working to reclaim their identity and preserve their cultures for future generations.

Native American identity is one that the dominant society has long sought to control and eliminate. The control began when European settlers arrived and colonization began. During the boarding school era, the mission was to "*Kill the Indian, Save the Man.*" Today, the lack of accurate media representation and the perpetuation of the stereotypical Indian has only kept Native American identity in the past. In 2013, Native scholars asked higher education institutions to look *Beyond the Asterisk*, a book by the same name. A purpose of the book was "to move beyond the asterisk in an effort to better understand Native students and challenge the status

quo” (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013, p. 2). Similarly, this study has found that when it comes to reporting on Native American issues, journalists and the media must look beyond the surface of the facts, and seek to understand the underlying factors in their reporting on Native issues.

Native American identity is complex, because it is diverse. There is not one overall story that can explain the history of each Native American nation and not one overall identity for Native people. Each Native nation holds its own cultural values, its own religion, its own language. While mass media organizations seek to report the stories of Native people, it is a perspective that cannot be understood if the journalist does not fully comprehend the complexity and the diversity of Native cultures and history. This comprehension is one that is embedded in the experiences of Native people, in their families, and is in their blood. Native American journalism allows for this perspective to be told, and is one that should be incorporated into mainstream media reporting.

A 1995 study, focusing on the pipeline into journalism for Native American journalists, found that Native journalists consider journalism as a new form of storytelling, “especially for journalists working in the Native media system” (Reaves, p. 68). Native American journalists utilize journalism to provide an understanding of the underlying factors and educate the larger global community. They utilize the very medium that historically sought to erase their history and identity, in order to further assimilate Native people, to share their stories and experiences. This is an example of Dr. Tachine’s words that illustrates how Native people took the negative and transformed it into a positive, using this medium to document and to preserve their history, stories, and practices and to reclaim their identity.



### **Purpose of the Study**

Through comparative analysis of traditional media and Native media, this study seeks to identify the elements of an article that differ for Native media, compared to mainstream media, and how elements of traditional Native American storytelling may be woven into the European model of journalism when written and distributed through Native American media outlets. This study seeks to convey the importance of the Native voice in modern journalism by analyzing and comparing the reporting of Native American issues between *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN) and *The New York Times* (NYT). Supporting this study are three theoretical frameworks: Framing theory, muted group theory, and tribal critical race theory.

The first chapter is split into three sections: adversity, perseverance, and transformation. The *adversity* section describes the painful and traumatic history of Native Americans. It aims to provide the reader with an understanding of Native history and its relevance in the issues impacting Native communities today. It is the history of Native people that has shaped the media's representation and the world's perception of Native identity. In the second section, the *perseverance* of Native Americans is showcased. Using the printing press as an example, this chapter relays how the press evolved into becoming a tool for Native American journalists to counter the misconceptions, in an effort to reclaim their identity. This section provides a brief history of Native journalism, describing the development of Native American media, and its importance in Native American communities. Lastly, before going into the context and findings of this study, the transformation section discusses the misrepresentation of Native identity and how it has impacted the media representation of Native people. In addition, the section discusses two of the three theories that support the study.

Together each element illustrates the transformations that have occurred within Native communities. Today, the use of media by Native people to reclaim their identity, and share their perspective is allowing for another transformation of their identity, one that is accurate and a true representation.

The importance for this study centers on Native Youth and the Haudenosaunee's philosophy of thinking of the next seven generations. Native Americans have long lived in a world ignoring the truth behind the founding of the United States. The effects of the traumatic experiences of an entire generation continues to plague the population, and in addition the misrepresentation and invisibility of Native Americans in the media also has consequences. The idea that all Native people are the same, has harmful effects. Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, and Fryberg (2015) found that "exposure to prominent media portrayals led Native American high school and college students to have more negative feelings about their self ... and community ...and depressed academic future possibilities ..." (p. 44). This study seeks to emphasize the importance of the Native American voice in modern day Native journalism and its importance in media, in hopes that future generations will understand the importance of their voice and that mainstream media will also recognize its importance.

## Chapter 1: Adversity, Perseverance, & Transformation

### Adversity

To understand the importance of Native American journalism, one must first have knowledge of Native American history, or America's history. While each Native nation has its own history of events, there are moments in time where their stories intertwine. These events are accounted for through stories that have been passed down and retold from generation to generation, as well as having been documented and researched by scholars.

The cultural assimilation attempts, made by newly arrived settlers and the United States government, of Native Americans, had dire consequences for how Native Americans are portrayed and for their ability to express their Native voice. The three focused on in this paper are: colonialism, Indian removal, and Indian boarding schools. These events were not only painful, but so traumatic that the effects are still present in today's Native communities. Each event played a role in shaping Native identity and the transformation of Native culture. They also influenced how Native Americans are represented in mainstream media.

**Colonialism.** Archeologists and anthropologists have tried to piece together the life and culture of Native American people prior to contact with European settlers who colonized the already inhabited land. It is through the analyzing of writings, written hundreds of years ago by Europeans, that the history of Native people is told. Early writings inform historians about Indigenous society and the role Indigenous women played in their society. These writings relate a story that shows the shift from a matrilineal society to a patriarchal one; interrupting the way of life, and disrupting harmony within the Indigenous community. Historians' early descriptions of Indigenous women were of them "[acting] independently of both Indigenous and newcomer men... gave the appearance of exercising agency... took initiative when it was in their interest to

do so” (Barman, 2010, p. 93). As time went on, the historians noticed a change in the descriptions of Indigenous women, as society moved toward a patriarchal society and the assimilation of Indigenous people began (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010). Barman (2010) writes of how the sexualization of Indigenous women “freed men to act toward them as they would rather than as Indigenous women’s behavior suggested they should” (p. 105). As for Indigenous men, the “barbarous Indians” (Carstarphen & Sanchez, 2010), “ruthless, faithless savage” (Merskin, 1998) have been the common narrative. As one scholar wrote, “the intent of whites was better served by creating a more fearsome myth” (Merskin, 1998, p. 334). By reducing Native people to a stereotype and dehumanizing them, it justified the treatment of Native people and only furthered the misrepresentation of Native people. Colonialism initiated the misrepresentation of Native people and transformed the culture of Native people.

The media plays a significant role in the representation of Native Americans and the shaping of their identity. The misrepresentation of Native people has communicated many of the “false identities” to the world that Murphy referred to. The false identities show up on movie sets, in the text of popular books, in the field of sports, and even the 2016 United States Presidential Election; which are explained further in this study.

**Removal.** On May 28, 1830, the United States Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, “[giving] the president authority to assign districts west of the Mississippi, not included in any state or territory, to tribes who chose to exchange their present lands and move there” (Littlefield & Parins, 2011, p. 105). The Act and process of removal was initiated by President Andrew Jackson. His supporters sought or “coveted Indian lands, whether it was for the gold or transportation routes or the fruit and cotton lands of the Cherokees, the cotton lands of the Creeks and Choctaws, the cotton lands and livestock range of the Chickasaws, rich farmlands in

the Midwest...” (Littlefield & Parins, 2011, p. xiv). Although the Act was deemed a “voluntary removal,” Jackson used it to force tribes who resisted to move west of the Mississippi (Littlefield & Parins, 2011).

The relocation of Native people took them from their ancestral land, displacing thousands. The Trail of Tears saw “the removal of the Cherokee, Muscogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw people from their homelands (Littlefield & Parins, 2011). The 1860s Long Walk displaced “more than 10,000 Navajos and Mescalero Apaches... to a desolate reservation in eastern New Mexico...” (Burnett, 2005, para 1). Merskin (1998) wrote, “as a result of reducing native people to types it was possible to generate a level of hatred and disgust sufficient to make genocide a seemingly reasonable solution to the ‘Indian problem’” (p. 334). The narrative of Native people being a problem to take care of was echoed in the Long Walk when “Gen. James Henry Carleton, commander of New Mexico Territory, decided to solve, once and for all, the ‘Navajo problem’” (Burnett, 2005, para 2). This “solution” saw “the Native American population [fall] from several million to roughly 250,000 people by 1900 (Merskin, 1998, p. 334) and the death of nearly 2,380 in the Long Walk (Burnett, 2005).

**Boarding schools.** In 1819, the United States government passed the Indian Civilization Fund Act, “which established a federal contribution of \$10,000 annually to be given to various denominational groups for the purpose of educating and civilizing the Indians” (Stout, 2012, p. 15). It was this act that funded the removal of Native American children from their homes and forced them to live in boarding schools. In 1879, the United States government opened the Carlisle Indian School, “an experimental off-reservation boarding school for Native Americans started by Colonel Richard Pratt” (Stout, 2012, p. xii). For decades, thousands of Native American children were taken from their families, their communities, and their lands. Native

children were placed in schools in order to assimilate them into “the larger European American society in the United States by means of a forced replacement of language and culture through immersion” (Stout, 2012, p. xii). Colonel Pratt’s mission, “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” forbade Native students from speaking their language, as well as the taking of their Native American name, “in an obvious effort to strip them of their culture and identity” (Stout, 2012, p. 36). In addition to the boarding school assimilation practices, Native American children suffered “physical, psychological and emotional trauma... [giving] rise to dysfunctional family relationships and patterns such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and sexual abuse, which are still present in many Native families and communities” (Tsosie, 2011, p. 36).

While the Carlisle Indian School closed in 1918, the assimilation experiment carried negative consequences and impacted Native American communities. For many students who eventually returned to their communities, they returned to a community in which they no longer felt accepted. For one student, Thomas Alford, it was a difficult transition as “He was not welcomed home with open arms, but rather with suspicion and coldness. He looked different, acted differently, and scorned many of the aspects of his new daily life, comparing them unfavorably with boarding school” (Stout, 2012, p. 122). The impact of the removal of Native American children from their homes are present today, as “many tribes continue to struggle to combat rampant unemployment and high rates of substance abuse [...], alcohol- and drug-related fatalities, domestic violence, and suicide” (Tsosie, 2010, p. 36).

Colonialism shaped the identity of Native people, both dehumanizing and sexualizing them, initiating the transformation of their culture and misrepresentation of their identity. The Indian removal forced Native people away from their homelands, transforming their culture as they had to adapt to their new surrounding in order to survive, losing the connection they

previously held with their homeland. The Indian boarding schools sought to save Native children from their *Indian-ness*. Boarding schools transformed the cultural identity of Native communities, as it resulted in the loss of Native languages and customs, and impacted future generations. These events have led Native nations struggling to preserve their culture and thus their identity is once again at stake.

### **Perseverance**

Reaves (1995) writes, that while Native Americans have gone through several social changes, that have drastically changed their ways of living, storytelling “remains an active, oral transmission of Native culture” (p. 59). Storytelling is not only a method used to transfer information but it also “empowers and constructs group identity” (Reaves, 1995, p. 60). For Native American cultures like the Haudenosaunee, the use of storytelling “preserves their rich teachings and culture” (Koblun, 2016, para 1). They use storytelling to keep their traditions and beliefs alive, and in the process preserving pieces of their culture that have been challenged by several attempts to assimilate Native people such as colonialism, restriction on Native languages, and removal.

**Tribal critical race theory.** In his introduction of tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit), Brayboy recognizes the importance of storytelling among Indigenous people. He describes storytelling as the “transmission of culture and knowledge” (2005, p. 439) where “Oral stories remind us of our origins and serve as lessons... serve as guideposts for our elders and other policy-makers... for researchers in institutions of higher education, there is a saliency in stories” (2005, p. 439).

TribalCrit emerges from the frameworks of critical race theory (CRT). It was developed to bring an understanding of the Indigenous experience, by highlighting the importance of stories

that reflect on Indigenous experiences, Indigenous history, and Indigenous knowledge. Both theories, TribalCrit and CRT, “values narrative and stories as important sources of data” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 428). The difference is that “TribalCrit honors stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and way of being. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439). Brayboy (2005) argues that while academics value theory and statistics, among Indigenous communities it is the stories that build the foundation and are as valuable as measurable data.

**Turning a negative into a positive.** The goal of assimilation was to strip Native people of their culture, identity, traditions, and beliefs, which was passed down through oral teachings. The printing press was used to challenge oral storytelling and was a tool used to rewrite Native history and restructure Native identity. Printing and the written word became tools used to further colonize and assimilate Native Americans (Murphy, 2010)

Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press brought about a cultural change in Europe. For one, prior to the printing press “The ability to read and write was confined to the great merchants and to the first two estates—the nobility and clergy” (Fellow, 2010, p. 2). The ability to print allowed for communication to travel and voices once silenced to be heard. Printing allowed for historical information to be copied and preserved. It also encouraged the creation of new literature and the sharing of information. From the printing press emerged news pamphlets and sheets, such as the *corrantos* in Amsterdam or *The Continuation of Our Weekly News* in England (Fellow, 2010). It was in the year 1704 that the first continuous newspaper in the American colonies, *The Boston News Letter*, was distributed (Fellow, 2010). When the United States Constitution was established, the writers placed an importance on including protection for the right to the freedom of expression. The right was solidified with the passing of the First Amendment, which reads:



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (U.S. Const. amend. I.)

In addition to solidifying these rights, the writers of the United States Constitution sought to “form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...” (U.S. Const. pmbl.), but early U.S. history shows that not all individuals were afforded those rights. For Native Americans, not only were they not considered equal, the freedoms granted by the Constitution also did not apply to them. The early experiences of Native Americans are not included in American textbooks, nor are their current experiences included in today’s mass media. The history of Native people has largely been told for them, with their perspectives and truth being left out, and their identity shaped for them. It was in 1828 when the printing press became a tool for Native people to tell their stories.

**Development of Native American media.** In the 1800s, Sequoyah developed the Cherokee syllabary system (Murphy, 2010), leading to several important developments for the Cherokee people, including the creation of the first bilingual tribal newspaper: *The Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians’ Advocate* (Coward, 2008, p. 322). The *Cherokee Phoenix* was created in February of 1828, a product of Elias Boudinot, in the midst of the Indian Removal Act (Coward, 2008). During the assimilation era, this publication was important in that it allowed tribal nations to communicate with each other during a time when “forces [were] impinging upon life and survival” (Murphy, 2010, p. 330). During this challenging time, Native people began to feel that they had to make a choice between keeping their traditions or becoming extinct. *The Cherokee*

*Phoenix*'s editor, Boudinot, was one individual who felt that "the Cherokees and other tribes, had two alternatives; they must either become civilized and happy, or sharing the fate of many kindred nations, become extinct" (Murphy, 2010, p. 330).

While Boudinot ultimately decided that "relocation was the only way to save the Nation" (Murphy, 2010, p. 330), and that choosing to be "civilized" was mandatory in order for Native existence to survive, his paper was first a tool that documented and preserved Cherokee laws and customs; and served as a model for other Native American publications to follow including: The *Cherokee Advocate* in 1844, the *Choctaw Intelligencer* in 1850, the *Cheyenne Transporter* in 1879, and the *Wassaja: Freedom's Signal for Indians* in 1916 (Coward, 2008). These publications used Native voices to "[investigate] threats to Indian self-determination, education, and land and water rights..." (Murphy, 2010, p. 332). Today, there are an estimated "280 reservation newspapers and bulletins, 320 urban Indian publications, a small but growing number of independent newspapers and 100 magazines and journals" (Murphy, 2010, p. 332). Native media today includes community papers like the *Navajo Times* which "[covers] the nation's largest tribe from Window Rock, Arizona" (Coward, 2008, p. 324) to *Indian Country Today* which "flourished, becoming the largest weekly in the South Dakota and eventually expanded its coverage" (Coward, 2008, p. 324). Native American journalists have been able to use the press, which had once been used to eradicate their history and identity, to share issues affecting Indian Country, to share accomplishments within the community, to maintain their tradition and culture of storytelling. Also importantly, Native American journalists "offer opportunities for self-awareness that challenge the often negative images available in mainstream media" (Murphy, 2010, p. 338) ... and "help tell stories and provide news and information not available elsewhere" (Murphy, 2010, p. 341).

The continued growth of Native American journalism led to the creation of a Native American Press Association. In an effort to “reinvigorate the Native media, address the widespread barriers and challenges facing Native journalists, and build on the strengths of Native communications” (“NAJA History,” 2016, para 5), in 1984 the Native American Press Association (NAPA) was established. Later, in 1990, the organization was renamed the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA), (“NAJA History,” 2016). Murphy (2010) writes of the importance of Native journalists in the media: “reservation and urban journalists have used the press in building and reflecting on community, championing Native American rights, correcting mistakes and misinterpretations by mainstream media and preserving important traditions in Indian Country” (p. 328).

**Community media impact on Native communities.** Over the years, Native American media has continued to grow and develop, connecting and informing millions of rural and urban Native communities. Today, it reflects a model known as community media. This model maintains similar attributes of traditional mass media, but it differs in several aspects. The goal of most mass media today—television stations, newspapers, and radio station—is to have the highest ratings because that translates into more money from advertisers (Gordon, 2012). In contrast, community media is community driven and focused, and its larger goal is to serve the needs of the community they are in. Jankowski (2003) refers to *community media* as “a diverse range of mediated forms of communication: electronic media such as radio and television, print media such as newspapers and magazines, and electronic network initiatives which embrace characteristics of both traditional print and electronic media” (p. 7). In his assessment, Jankowski looks at the ownership and control, the content, production, distribution, audience, and financing of community media. Jankowski (2003) found that in community media the content and

ownership are community controlled. The production includes members from the community who may not have had professional training, but more importantly gives the audience someone they can relate to and identify with. The focus is community. Unlike commercially driven media, community media are meant to reflect, represent, and include members of the community (Jankowski, 2003).

However, it is important to note that community media found in Native American communities stands alone and is its own model. It is unique as its purpose is to connect rural and urban Native communities, transfer information to other tribal communities, and preserve Indigenous culture. For Native people, the continued dependence on community newspapers and radio stems from the large distances separating many Native communities, as they are located in “more rural and isolated locations of the United States” (Guskin & Mitchell, 2012, para 1). At a time when Native Americans have very limited access to broadband Internet, newspapers and radio stations still play a large role in many Native communities.

Native American communities are unique and diverse, and the community media reflects the unique cultures of each tribal nation. There are 566 federally recognized American Indian tribes, about 5.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs), and 326 federally recognized American Indian reservations in the United States (“Facts for Features,” 2015). Altogether, Native Americans make up about 2% of the United States population. These 566 tribal nations span across the United States. Native Americans may live in urban areas, but a majority live in rural areas, known as reservations. These reservations vary by size and are separated from their sister communities by large distances. The U.S. Census defines American Indian reservations as follows:

... areas with boundaries established by treaty, statute, and /or executive or court order.

The reservation and their boundaries are identified for the Census Bureau by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), an agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior, or by State governments. (“AIAN Areas,” n.d., p. 1)

An example is the Navajo Nation. This Nation covers 27,000 square miles and four states, and “population centers are clusters of housing around schools, hospitals, trading posts, and chapters houses” (University of Arizona, 2008, p. 1). The Nation as a whole relies on community media, like Native radio and newspapers, to keep them connected to the happenings within the many communities that are spread across those 27,000 square miles. The Navajo Nation is served by the largest weekly Native newspaper, *The Navajo Times*, which also has an on-line presence, and the AM commercial station KTNN, “Voice of the Navajo Nation,” which broadcasts news and entertainment, not only across the large Nation but across the country through its online format (Murphy, 2010).

Native American community media is an accurate representation of its community. Due to low visibility, Native Americans have been plagued with false stereotypes about them that are spread through mainstream media, “based mostly on lingering romantic, primitive, and negative stereotypes” (Fuller, 2007, p. 56). Native Americans are “fed up with the lack of service provided by the mass media and the stereotyping such access and misrepresentation that is prevalent in the media” (Smith & Cornette, 1998, para 5). Community media provide Native people with the opportunity to use their voice and the chance to “define who they are, or who they feel they are, as compared to what other groups say about what they are (culture) and what they think about different issues” (Fuller, 2007, p. 58). Native communities are also surrounded by non-native communities who have their own community media, but as is the case with

mainstream media, the media of non-native communities often leave Native people out of their conversations.

It is likely that due to the small size of the American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs) population, this leaves AIANs out of mainstream conversations, leaving many to feel neglected and invisible (Fuller, 2007). The importance of community media in Native American communities stems from the fact that they are often left out of conversations within mainstream media coverage. Small populations are usually left voiceless, and it is difficult to share their side of the story when the larger media is not interested, because it is usually not what will create interest among their audience and therefore will affect their revenue. This further illustrates the importance of community media.

For Native communities, community media provides a connection between Native American communities who are spread far apart and would not otherwise have the means to share information to a large group quickly. It is also an outlet allowing these communities to have a voice and the ability to express their culture. At a time when Native communities are still reeling from the traumatic and painful events of their history, community media has given Native people a voice to share their historical perspective, the opportunity to preserve their culture, and the ability to reclaim their identity.

### **Transformation**

The beginning of this paper touched on three events that transformed Native American culture and impacted their identity. Native American identity continues to be an issue impacting Native communities. The issue is complex, as it encompasses a diverse population. Yet, since the first settlers arrived, Native Americans have been grouped as one population and not separate cultures. Today, this representation is still used by mainstream media and only encourages the

misrepresentation of a population in which cultural appropriation and stereotypes continue to project a negative identity on Native people.

Murphy (2010) writes that “media neglect or misinterpretation of peoples cultures, whether benign or malevolent, imposes on those peoples and cultures false identities and communicates those false identities to the rest of the world” (p. 329). Today, false identities still plague Native Americans, where they are seen as historical 19<sup>th</sup> century figures (Leavitt et al., 2015), and not portrayed as modern beings who contribute to society.

**Muted group theory.** Muted group theory (MGT) argues that there is an “asymmetrical power relationships” that exists in society. The theory, initially applied to anthropology, has been applied to study the non-dominant group experiences of women and of African American men (Orbe, 1998). This theory posits that “marginalized groups [are] largely muted because their lived experiences are not represented in the dominate structures” (Orbe, 1998, p. 4).

In her evaluation of MGT, Kramarae notes that MGT not only focuses on the differences in gender, but is also concerned with “other marginalizing differences as well (including race, sexuality, age, and class,” Kramarae, 2005, p. 55). Kramarae’s research of muted group theory supports the basis of this study: that the story and history of Native Americans have long been told for them by the dominant group because of the oppression they have faced and the dominant society silencing their voice throughout history. Kramer 2005 writes that the power of speech lies with the dominant society and the power is kept from them:

Their speech is disrespected by those in the dominant positions; their knowledge is not considered sufficient for public decision-making or policy making processes of that culture; their experiences are interpreted for them by others; and they are encouraged to see themselves as represented in the dominate discourse. (p. 55)

The voice of Native Americans has mostly been muted, with their voices and stories being heard within their own communities and through organizations like Indian Country Today Media Network. While women are more than the kitchen they've been placed in, and African American men more than the stereotypes they've been given, Native American and Indigenous people are more than the false identities given to them. They have different cultures, different customs and languages but have longed been grouped together, "[presented as] one homogenous Indian image" (Merskin, 1998, p. 335) and one that is "frozen in time" (Leavitt et al., 2015.)

Native people are wanting their stories to be shared, wanting to be humanized, and wanting to be seen as more than a stereotype or a mascot. Leavitt et. al (2015) writes:

Many groups experience relative invisibility... but what differentiates Native Americans is that they uniquely experience absolute invisibility... they are rarely (if ever) seen as contemporary figures in the media, which means they are absent from depictions of mainstream public spaces, such as schools and hospitals, and from many professional positions, such as teachers, professors, doctors, and lawyers. (p. 41)

In a society where Native Americans make up 1.6% of the United States population (Leavitt et al., 2015, p. 14), their story has been told for them and their representation created or framed for them. The foundation of this study is framing theory. The concept of this theory centers on the idea that individuals process information differently and a part of the reason is due to the way information is presented, or framed. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) write that framing "is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences" (p. 11). Chong and Druckman (2007) write that "the major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations" (p.



104). Taking these definitions into consideration, this study seeks to use framing theory as its foundation and apply it to the study of the media representation of Native American and their identity.

**Framing theory.** Framing theory seeks to identify the communication process between the communicator and the receiver, while taking into consideration the cultural environment (de Vreese, 2005). The understanding is done by looking at the frame-building and the frame-setting. De Vreese (2005) describes frame-building as “factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames” (p. 52), and frame-setting as “the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions” (p. 52). These processes include looking at internal and external factors and the effects the framing has on the audience and society as a whole (de Vreese, 2005).

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) describe framing as a way to make complex issues more understandable to an audience who may not know the specifics of an issue. The issue with using frames to understand a perspective is that “there is little consensus as how to identify frames in the news” (de Vreese, 2005, p. 53). In his research, de Vreese (2005) identifies two approaches for identifying frames: inductive, where news stories are analyzed and “frames emerge from the material during the course of analysis” (p. 53), and deductive, where frames are investigated, defined, and focusing on causality. In their article on framing analysis, Pan and Kosicki (1993) look at the concepts of framing and its process. In this article they write that framing can be a sociological concept and a psychological concept, where frames are used to organize then distribute ideas/information to an audience, or frames are used to place influence in the minds. However, they do point out that frames can be a combination of both sociological

and psychological concepts, where it is “a strategy of constructing and processing news discourse or as a characteristic of the discourse itself” (p. 57).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) wrote of the framing structures of news discourse in which they centered on the idea that every story has a theme, in which the themes give meaning to the story. These themes, also identified as frames, can be classified into four categories: syntactical structures, script structure, thematic structures, and rhetorical structures (p. 59)

- Syntactical structures: “refer to the stable patterns of the arrangement of words or phrases into sentences” (p. 59).
- Script structures: “refers to an established and stable sequence of activities and components of an event that have been internalized as a structured mental representation of the event” (p. 60).
- Thematic structures: “is a multilayer hierarchy with a theme being the central core connecting various subthemes as the major nodes that, in turn, are connected to supporting elements” (p. 61).
- Rhetorical structures: “describe the stylistic choices made by journalists in relation to their intended effects” such as “metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images” (p. 61).

This research uses the inductive in nature approach (de Vreese) to analyze the frames used in the media representation of Native Americans on the issues concerning identity. In addition, the four framing structures are used to identify the themes of each article and to interpret the signifying elements of the theme. With the support of framing theory and muted group theory this research seeks to communicate the importance of the Native voice/perspective in media.

The three sections of this study focus on providing the reader with a brief history of Native people and the impact that history continues to have on Native communities today. It is important to note that colonization, forced removal, and boarding schools are only mere glimpses into the history of Native Americans. The history of the press and Native people goes back to early colonization, when settlers wrote their perspective of Native people down to the press being used as a tool to further oppress and colonize Native people.

The second section, *perseverance*, describes the development of Native American community journalism. It began with Boudinot's *Cherokee Phoenix*, and today there are over 200 Native American community newspapers. These newspapers provide Native people with the ability to share their stories, to inform readers of issues impacting Native communities, and to connect the millions of Native people who reside in rural and urban communities. Native American community journalism is both reflective and a representative of the Nation it reports on and seeks to tell the stories that are left out of mainstream media.

Lastly, the *transformation* section centers on the fact that over the last few hundred years, the representation of Native people has not changed because it is being told by individuals who are not able to understand the full story. However, the small Native community publications and the work of individuals are working to reclaim their identity and bring an accurate representation of each 566 federally recognized Native American nations.

**Research question.** Since 1828, Native American journalism and media has continued to grow. What was one bilingual newspaper has resulted in numerous native publications, radio stations, and blogs that give Native Americans a voice. A 1995 study by Shiela Reaves, found that members of the Native American Journalist Association (NAJA) considered journalism to be a new form of storytelling.

The literature finds that there are differences between community media and mainstream media, mostly that community media is meant to reflect and represent the community. From the 1995 study, there is evidence that Native journalists use journalism to share their stories, their voice. The research question posed is: *How does the framing of Native American issues differ between Native community media and mainstream media, and in those difference how is the Native voice heard?*

For the purpose of this research, “Native voice” is defined as the historical and/or personal (present) voice used by the writer. This definition is based off of N. Scott Momaday’s explanation of the “three distinct narrative voices:” the immediate, the historical, and the mythic (Morel, 2005). Morel (2005) writes that together they work, “the same way as the past, present, and future” work together (p. 32).

## Chapter 2: Context of Study

This study will take articles, focused on the topic of identity, from *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN) and the *New York Times* to analyze the reporting done by these two news organizations. While there are several Native American community papers, ICTMN covers issues from across Indian Country and not solely on a particular nation. The *New York Times* was chosen because of the reputation it has and its commitment to reporting quality news. The earlier sections of this paper sought to bring understanding of Native American history, of the Native American community, and the importance of Native American media, such as journalism.

### Indian Country Today Media Network

In 1981, Tim Giago (Lakota) founded the weekly newspaper *Indian Country Today* in South Dakota (Coward, 2008). The success of this paper allowed for it to expand its coverage and was eventually purchased by the Oneida Nation of New York in 1998 (Coward, 2008). After the purchase, the weekly continued to see success with *Indian Country Today* expanding to “include quarterly magazines and a web site, indiancountry.com, one of many popular sources of Native American information on the Internet” (Coward, 2008, p. 324). In 2011, the newspaper was renamed *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN) and promoted as “the first ever all-inclusive media network for Native Americans” (PRNewswire, 2011, para 1). Today, ICTMN has become a global type of community media for the Native American community and is considered to be “the world’s largest and most trusted news source for contemporary Native American and indigenous news...” (PRWeb, 2014, para 1). ICTMN’s transition from a print magazine to the online website allowed the national newspaper to “[provide] Native people across North American with an easily accessible news source over a variety of topics affecting American Indian people in the U.S., from politics and business to sports and environment”

(Bosco, 2015, para 2). ICTMN continues to see success after the 2011 website launch. In June 2014, ICTMN reached an online traffic milestone with 1,009,761 unique monthly visitors (PRWeb, 2014). For this study, *Indian Country Today Media Network* will be used because of its reputation as a trusted news source for Native Americans news and reporting of issues that impact Indian Country.

### **The New York Times**

As one of the largest American news organizations, the *New York Times* is considered to be one of the leading newspapers in the world. Founded in 1835, as the New York Herald (“Our History,” 2016), the *New York Times* has seen a transition from print to learning to embrace technology and the Internet. In 1996, the *Times* introduced the *New York Times* website, making articles accessible online and to the world (“Our History,” 2016). Over the years, the NYT has covered U.S. Presidential elections, terrorism attacks, global economics, wars, and various scandals, to name a few.

A reason the NYT is highly regarded may be due to the high standards it places on its journalists. On its Standards and Ethics website, *The New York Times* (2016, para 1) states that its core purpose “is to enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high-quality news and information. Producing content of the highest quality and integrity is the basis for our reputation and the means by which we fulfill the public trust and our customers’ expectations.” It lists *fairness*, *integrity*, and *truth* as the foundation helping carry out their purpose. For this study, the *New York Times* will be used because of its reputation as “the newspaper of record in the United States and one of the world’s greatest newspapers” (Britanica, 2016). It is because of its stance on *fairness*, *integrity*, and *truth* that this paper seeks to examine its reporting on Native

American issues in comparison to what is considered the Native American media equivalent to the NYT: Indian Country Media Network Today.

### **Theories**

To analyze the structure of these stories, tribal critical race theory, muted group theory, and framing theory are applied to this study. Tribal critical race theory was applied to this research as it aims to “address the issues of Indigenous Peoples in the United States (Brayboy, 2005, p. 427) by taking into account the experiences of Indigenous people and addresses the issues, but “emphasizes that colonization is endemic in society while also acknowledging the role played by racism” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). Muted group theory, briefly introduced earlier, helps to support the importance of Native American journalists and community media, as this theory asserts that “in every society a social hierarchy exists that privileges some groups over others” and “groups that function at the top of the social hierarchy determine to a great extent the communication system of the entire society” (Orbe, 1998, p. 4). For the analyzing of the articles, from the *New York Times* and *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN), framing theory is being applied to help understand what perspectives, or frames, are emphasized more in each article, by each organization.

The analyzation of the articles aims to identify if the Native voice is present in today’s Native journalism by comparing the reporting of recent stories that focus on Native identity. Articles from these two news organizations will center on the following issues: Adam Sandler’s 2016 movie controversy, the National Football League’s (NFL) Washington DC football team name, and the rhetoric of Presidential candidate Donald Trump. These three issues were selected due to the amount of coverage in the year between 2015-2016. During the research process, it was found that while there are many issues that impact Native communities, many are not

reported on in the mainstream media. The fourth issue, the new J.K. Rowling series, is included because it demonstrates an example of how reporting on Native issues differs between mainstream media and Native American community media.



### Chapter 3: Method & Results

#### Method

**Data collection.** For this study, news articles that focused on issues regarding Native American identity were collected from the *New York Times* and *Indian Country Media Network Today* websites. Specifically, this study will analyze articles that report on the following events:

- articles in reference to Adam Sandler's *The Ridiculous Six* film
- articles in reference to the Washington Post's poll on offensiveness of the name of the National Football League (NFL)'s Washington Redskins
- articles that report on the new J.K. Rowling book, *History of Magic in North America*
- articles pertaining to Donald Trump's reference of Pocahontas in an attempt to call out Senator Elizabeth Warren's claim of Native heritage.

A search was used, from each site's database, to locate articles, with similar/close publication dates, for each recent issue being analyzed. The table below shows the event chosen and a description of the event. The statements are meant to be objective and based on facts included in both articles. Also shown are the search terms used to identify articles pertaining to each of the four events and includes the number of articles written by the two media organizations. In total, two articles for every issue were analyzed and their themes analyzed based on the four framing structures of news discourse: syntactical structures, script structure, thematic structures, and rhetorical structures. The eight articles, photocopied, were read in entirety and analyzed to identify themes related to identity. In the analyzing of each article, the following were examined: the article title, the lead paragraph, sources, and the number of articles on those subjects from each organization.

Table 1

*Events Being Analyzed*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Search terms</i>	<i># of NYT Articles as of 8.8.16</i>	<i># of ICTMN articles as of 8.8.16</i>
<b><i>Adam Sandler’s The Ridiculous Six</i></b>	In April 2015, the <i>New York Times</i> and <i>Indian Country Today Media Network</i> reported that Native American actors walked off the set of Adam Sandler’s production, <i>The Ridiculous Six</i> , due to offensive content.	<b>“Ridiculous Six”</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>
<b><i>Washington Post Poll</i></b>	A <i>Washington Post</i> poll found that 504 Native Americans did not feel the word ‘Redskin’ was offensive.	<b>“Washington post” poll redskins</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>
<b><i>J.K. Rowling series</i></b>	In 2016, J.K. Rowling released a piece for her new series “History of Magic in North America.”	<b>“History of Magic”</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Donald Trump’s Pocahontas comment</i></b>	Native American leaders from the Navajo Nation stated that due to conflicts they would not be able to meet with Donald Trump during his visit to Arizona.	<b>“Donald Trump” Pocahontas</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>

**Results**

**Research question.** How are Native American issues framed differently in *Indian Country Today Media Network (ICTMN)* and the *New York Times (NYT)*?

**Sources.** The most significant difference between the articles, by the two media organizations, are the sources used to provide information on each event. While both organization’s articles shared similar sources, a common practice was the use of experts and scholarly sources by the NYT which included: individuals from the National Congress of

American Indians, linguist experts, politicians, and outside journalists. Whereas, ICTMN sought the opinions of activists and Native American leaders, academics, and members. The difference in sources used, resulted in a difference in the tone of each article. In the articles by ICTMN, which used more “community” sources, the tone addressed the issues differently and framed the issues in a different manner.

Take for example the article regarding Native Americans walking off the set of the film *Ridiculous Six*. The two articles, by the NYT and ICTMN, were published on the same day, but the NYT article is only four paragraphs long and consisted of three sources: Netflix, Allison Young, and ICTMN. On the other hand, ICTMN article is 18 paragraphs long and its sources included: Allison Young, Loren Anthony, Goldie Tom, and David Hill, whom provided the Native American perspective of the situation.

Young, a Navajo actress, was quoted in both articles, saying: “*Nothing has changed. We are still just Hollywood Indians.*” However, in addition to the quote, ICTMN provided information on her experience before the incident occurred.

When I began doing this film, I had an uneasy feeling inside of me and I felt so conflicted,” she said. “I talked to a former instructor at Dartmouth and he told me to take this as finally experiencing stereotyping first hand. We talked to our producers about our concerns. They told us, ‘If you guys are so sensitive, you should leave’... “A film like this should not make someone feel this way. (Schilling, 2015, para 11)

ICTMN’s inclusion of Young’s experience went beyond just reporting the facts, but went beyond the surface and provided an understanding of what she and other Native actors had felt prior to walking off the set. ICTMN provided a different perspective to the situation than the NYT’s article.

In the attempt to hear the Native voice, this research focused on listening for the historical and/or personal voice of *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN) writers. This research's definition of Native voice stems from N. Scott Momaday's explanation of the three narrative voices: the immediate, the historical, and the mythic (Morel, 2005). This research analyzed the four articles and were able to identify the writer's use of historical and personal voices in their articles. The historical voice was heard when the article included information about historical inaccuracies that caused the Native actors to be offended: "Our costumes did not portray Apache people. The consultant, Bruce spoke to the crew and told them we should not have braids and chokers and he was very disappointed" (Schilling, 2015, para 13). Or stressing the importance of understanding tribal history and sovereignty.

The personal voice was heard when the tribal identity of the sources and subjects were identified. The sources also brought the personal voice, because of the word choices: "In Trump's eyes, we're just stereotypes" (Landry, 2016, para 8). The personal voice was also heard when the writers did not dismiss "the lifelong experience and sound judgement of actual Native peoples who are in positions of trust and who reflect the will of Native people they represent" (Moya-Smith, 2016, para 9) because they included the Native voices, who were the main sources.

The distinct use of community sources in ICTMN articles allowed for the Native voice to be heard. It was the most distinct difference between the two news organizations. The community sources provided information that was both reflective and a representation of the Native community.

Table 2

*Analysis of Indian Country Today Media Network Articles*

<b>Event</b>	<b>ICTMN Article Title</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<i>Adam Sandler's The Ridiculous Six</i>	Native Actors Walk Off Set of Adam Sandler Movie After Insults to Women, Elders	Navajo Nation tribal member, Navajo film student, and American Indian Movement member
<i>Washington Post poll</i>	Washington Post Finds 500 People Who Don't Find R-Word Offensive; Half Say They Are Enrolled Tribal Members	Washington Post poll, Pew Research Center, and Native American activist
<i>J.K. Rowling series</i>	J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter' Prequel Includes Native American Magic	Pottermore website, statements by Rowling, Native scholar
<i>Donald Trump's Pocahontas comment</i>	Navajo Leaders Opt Out of Meeting With Trump	Navajo Council Speaker Navajo activist; Arizona State Senator; and protest organizer

**Headlines.** The differences, between the two articles, were also noticed in the headlines and lead paragraphs. The titles for the NYT article were shorter, less descriptive, and contained one fact (see Tables 2 and 3 for titles). When compared, *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN)'s titles were longer and included, at times, more than one fact in the article title.

Take for example the articles about Adam Sandler's movie: "Native Actors Walk Off Set of Adam Sandler Movie After Insults to Women, Elders" (ICTMN) and "Native American Actors Walk Off Adam Sandler Movie" (NYT). Both titles are similar, but the NYT article is more concise, while the ICTMN article is longer and more descriptive.

**Lead paragraph.** The lead paragraphs for the articles by both organizations provided a summary of the purpose for the articles. However, they differed in that ICTMN provided more information on the controversy surrounding the issues being reported on, and jumped into the

issue, rather than lead into the issues. For example, below are the two lead paragraphs for the articles that reported the findings of the *Washington Post* poll.

The *New York Times* article (Barry, 2016) began with:

*Growing up as a member of the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, Brian Howard attended an elementary school that was within the boundaries of Phoenix and beyond those of his reservation. There, in the third grade, he was first called “redskin.”*

The *Indian Country Today Media Network* article (Moya-Smith, 2016) began with:

*It didn’t take long after The Washington Post published a report claiming 9 out of 10 Native Americans do not find the name of the **Washington NFL team** offensive before prominent Native American leaders and activists began calling it “flawed” and “irresponsible.”*

In addition, the word choices of the writer added to the differences. For one, the writers of the ICTMN articles rarely used the term “redskin” when writing on the subject. As there are Native Americans that find the term “redskins” to be offensive, ICTMN instead replaced it by using the “R-Word” or “the Washington NFL team” in its place.

**Hypothesis testing.** The most significant thematic difference among the articles written by *New York Times* (NYT) and *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN) was the use of hypothesis-testing. Stories with a thematic structure “contains certain hypothesis-testing features: events are cited, sources are quoted, and propositions are pronounced” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 60). In most of the articles, the titles served as the hypothesis with evidence supporting the hypothesis in the body of the text, for example:

1. **Headline of article (hypothesis):** Donald Trump’s Use of ‘Pocahontas’ Has Native Americans Worried”

**Supporting evidence:** *“For many, his mention of the historical figure is offensive and a sign that Mr. Trump, who has been accused of being anti-immigrant, also has problems with the people who first inhabited the country”* (Rappeport, 2016, para 4).

2. **Headline of article (hypothesis):** Native Actors Walk off set of Adam Sandler movie after insults to women, elders

**Supporting evidence:** the supporting events, actions, or statements include: the names of characters, the misrepresentation of the Apache culture, and the script which insulted native women and the elderly (Schilling, 2015).

In other cases, the hypothesis is found in the body of the text, or in the following example in the lead paragraph.

3. **Headline of article:** Washington Post Finds 500 people who don’t find r-word offensive; half say they are enrolled tribal members

**Body of article:** It didn’t take long after *The Washington Post* published a report claiming 9 out of 10 Native Americans do not find the name of the Washington NFL team offensive before prominent Native American leaders and activists began calling it “flawed” and “irresponsible.”

**Hypothesis:** the poll is “flawed” and “irresponsible.”

**Supporting evidence:** *“...it does not take into account the empirical research that found words like ‘redskin’ and ‘savage’ harm the mental health of Native American youths; and secondly, that more than half – 56 percent – of the respondent’s self-identity as Native Americans”* (Moya-Smith, 2016, para 3).

**Amount of articles.** For each event, ICTMN wrote more articles than the NYT. The issue of J.K. Rowling’s new book, which the basis is of “the Native American magical

community” (Rowling, 2016), had five articles written by ICTMN, but the NYT did not report on the controversial issue. The sole result from a search using the NYT’s website came up with an article regarding the J.K. Rowling’s inability to “...Let Harry Potter Go,” and did not mention the controversy. However, it is important to note that a quick Google search resulted in articles on the controversy by other mainstream media outlets. The event of the Adam Sandler movie produced the most articles with 37 written by ICTMN and 3 by the NYT.

Table 3

*Analysis of New York Times Articles*

<b>Event</b>	<b>NYT Article Title</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b><i>Adam Sandler’s The Ridiculous Six</i></b>	Native American Actors Walk Off Adam Sandler Movie	<i>Indian Country Today Media Network, Navajo actress</i>
<b><i>Washington Post Poll</i></b>	A Heated Linguistic Debate: What Makes ‘Redskins’ a Slur?	a legislative associate for the National Congress of American Indians; journalists; a senior staff lawyer; a linguist; Arizona journalist; and a tribal lawyer
<b><i>J.K. Rowling series</i></b>	J.K. Rowling Just Can’t Let Harry Potter Go (note: article not on Native identity issue)	- N/A
<b><i>Donald Trump’s Pocahontas comment</i></b>	Donald Trump’s Use of ‘Pocahontas’ Has Native Americans Worried	executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, the chairwoman of the New Mexico Democratic Party; lawyer; Navajo Nation spokesman; state Senator; and Navajo Republican.



### Chapter 4: Discussion

The framing differences among the articles indicate that there is a difference between the reporting by the two news organizations. These differences were seen in the sources, headlines, and lead paragraphs of each article. For one, when compared to the *New York Times* (NYT), articles by *Indian Country Today Media Network* (ICTMN) differed in that the headlines were usually longer, and more descriptive. However, an explanation for this could be that the NYT is also a printed publication, and with that there are space constraints for headlines.

The results suggest that sources played a significant role in the differences between the two reports. As ICTMN's sources were more community based, it allowed for the Native voice to be heard. In one example, ICTMN gave Native actors the opportunity to provide their accounts and reasons for walking off the set of Sandler's film. In another example, it allowed scholars to present their research findings of the harmful effects that offensive and derogatory language can have on Native youth. Native journalism allowed tribal officials to speak out and talk about issues that are impacting Native communities. In these instances, the reporting went beyond just the facts. It included information that recognizes the experiences of Native people, told by Native people. It is through those experiences that brought an alternative perspective on each event.

The structures of the news discourse varied in the reporting by both organizations. However, the results suggest that the "thematic structure" was used frequently. The articles with a thematic structure also utilized a hypothesis-testing element. The hypotheses were either found in the headline of the article or the body of the article. The articles then proceeded to support the hypothesis through information from the sources.

While not every issue relating to the Native American community may be relevant enough for the *New York Times* to report on, it was disappointing to find that there was not one single article by the NYT that reported on the controversy behind the new J.K. Rowling book. A quick Google search shows a few articles written on the issue by other media organizations. It is a topic that has impacted the Native community, as she is a very well-known author, who has written a series of books that impacted an entire generation. The idea of Native Americans as magical, mythical, wandless creatures does not help in the struggle to reclaim Native identity.

Overall, the number of articles that touch on controversial issues regarding Native identity by the *New York Times* pales in comparison to ICTMN, but that is almost expected due to all the issues and events happening worldwide. In the three articles analyzed, what was missing was depth. ICTMN articles provided the reader with a deep understanding of the issues because it included community sources.

Muted group theory is based on the concept that marginalized groups are not heard in the dominant society because they are silenced. On a larger platform, this study indicates that this still remains true among the Native American population, but there is also an indication that this marginalized group is making strides in having their voices be heard in their own media. The use of Native media to promote awareness on Native American issues and as a platform for Native voices to be heard can help change the conversations. A consideration would be to have the Native voice report on Native issues for the larger media organizations.

In the ICTMN articles, the Native voice was heard in the sources. The sources can be seen in Table 1. ICTMN sources brought the Native perspective, a perspective that understands the complexity because it was lived. Experts and scholars, can study the perspective but it can never be fully understood. Even when sources are shared, the outcome and voice is different. In

many aspects ICTMN's reporting was deeper, reporting information that provides the readers with information about the impact on the community.

In one article, the *New York Times*' reporting on Native issue stemmed from a report done by *Indian Country Today Media Network*. This further illustrates that mainstream media and journalism need more diversity. This study helps to illustrate the need for Native American journalists in mainstream media; individuals who are able to write comprehensively on Native issues, because they know the history and are able to relate to this history, in a way that others can't understand. Recently, this has been seen with Native people writing op-eds for mainstream publications, but permanence is needed.

Reaves' (1993) study found that for Native journalists, "journalism is considered a new form of storytelling... especially for journalists working in the Native media system" (p. 68). The findings of this study support Reaves' findings in that there are differences in the reporting by the two media organizations studied. The idea that journalism serves as an outlet for Native journalists to share their stories supports tribal critical race theory that "stories as 'data' are important, and one key to collecting these data is 'hearing' the stories" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 440). For Native people, "Stories often are the guardians of cumulative knowledges that hold a place in the psyches of the group members, memories of tradition, and reflections of powers" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 440).

### **Limitations/Future research**

This paper only touched on the surface and has room to grow and explore further. Native Identity was only one topic analyzed, there are many more issues that impact the Native community and could be compared. Limitations include time and the need to fulfill requirements by a specific deadline. There was also a limited amount of articles that touched on the subject of

Native Americans in the media, and the articles found were older and did not account for changes in media technology.

Future research might study the impressions of individuals when they read both the *New York Times* and *Indian Country Today Media Network*. How do readers hear the Native voice, or do they sense a difference? Another study could duplicate Reaves' 1993 research to identify if, over time, anything has changed. In the last few weeks, the Dakota Access Pipeline has become an important topic in Indian Country, however it is one that is not getting much media attention. Some have compared the amount of coverage to the Oregon ranchers who took over a wildlife refuge in early 2016. Research on the coverage of the two events would be one that would bring more understanding to how the media chooses to cover "Native news."

### Chapter 5: Moving Forward

Brayboy (2006) wrote that “TribalCrit is based on a series of traditions, ideas, thoughts, and epistemologies that are grounded in tribal histories thousands of years old” (p. 441).

Journalism for Native people is also grounded in that same history and traditions. For Native people, journalism began with storytelling as it was a method of sharing information, and was used to keep traditions, teachings, and history alive. When Elias Boudinot produced the first bilingual Native paper, he produced a new method of communication that transferred information and allowed for the development of other Native publications to be produced.

At a time when Native people were being challenged and the US government was actively trying to be free of their Indian problem, Native people persevered and transformed. Community journalism, and media, has had a very significant impact on Native American communities. It is both a reflection and a representation of the Native American community, one that is needed across mainstream media.

This study analyzed articles from the *New York Times* and *Indian Country Today Media Network* to identify the Native American voice in modern day journalism. By analyzing the articles, on similar topics, written at the same time, this study sought to identify the framing differences in the reporting. The results indicate that there are differences, from the choice of words and the sources included. It is in these differences that the Native voice is identifiable in Native American journalism.

The Native voice can be heard in the writings of Native journalists and scholars. While their identity has been challenged throughout history, Native people have held on to who they are, through the stories and the knowledge of their history, and today they are using journalism to share stories of events impacting their community.

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