

Illinois State University

ISU ReD: Research and eData

Theses and Dissertations

3-11-2022

Native American Women's Standpoint: Narratives About Identity

Kaitlyn Nicole Sullivan

Illinois State University, skait7@vt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Sullivan, Kaitlyn Nicole, "Native American Women's Standpoint: Narratives About Identity" (2022). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1578.

<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/1578>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact ISURed@ilstu.edu.

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S STANDPOINT: NARRATIVES ABOUT IDENTITY

KAITLYN NICOLE SULLIVAN

105 Pages

The present study explored the lived experiences of Native American women and possible reasons why they perceive themselves in the way that they do. Female participants (N=10) were asked to share about their lives for approximately an hour each. Participants were encouraged to discuss their Native American heritage as well as their opinions on Media. Participants' views on media were varied. However, many participants felt that they were more connected to the earth than their White counterparts were. As many Native American women have grown up living in a White-dominant world, this may affect how they perceive themselves.

KEYWORDS: Native American, women, White, media, experiences

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S STANDPOINT: NARRATIVES ABOUT IDENTITY

KAITLYN SULLIVAN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Communication

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2022

© 2022 Kaitlyn Nicole Sullivan

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S STANDPOINT: NARRATIVES ABOUT IDENTITY

KAITLYN NICOLE SULLIVAN

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

John Baldwin, Chair

Phil Chidester

Megan Hopper

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this study could not have been possible without the expertise, and many grammatical edits of Dr. John Baldwin. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Phillip Chidester and Dr. Megan Hopper for their consistent guidance and encouragement. I'm grateful to Sarah Fulk and Jake Fulk for giving me a safe place to relax throughout my time at Illinois State University. Without you all, I'm not sure how I could have completed this. To Michael Foley, I am thankful for all of your edits as well and your ability to turn my paragraph-long sentences into something coherent enough to become multiple thoughts.

To my parents, Bruce Sullivan and Missy Sullivan, there are no words to describe just how grateful I am to have the both of you in my corner, pushing me when necessary and forcing me to relax when needed. I appreciate all of the sacrifices that you two made so that I am able to pursue my passions.

Finally, to my participants and all Native American women, despite the many challenges that we may face in our lives it is important to remember the strength of our people. I encourage you all to continue being authentically yourselves, as we all should.

K.N.S.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
Guiding Theories	9
Life Situations	15
Minority Group Membership and the Media	17
American Blacks in Mass Media	19
Asian Americans in Mass Media	20
Women in Mass Media	21
Effects of False Representations of Minority Groups in Media	24
Responses to Misrepresentations of Minority Groups in Media	27
Native Americans in Media	28
Effects of Misrepresentations of Native Americans in Media	32
Native American Responses to Misrepresentation in Media	34
The Current Study	38
Conclusion	39
CHAPTER III: METHODS	41
Participants	42
Data Collection	43
Procedure	43

Interview Protocol	44
Data Analysis	45
Conclusion	48
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	49
Native Women, the Media, and Identity	49
Theorizing Native Women’s Identity	52
Standpoint Theory	52
Social Identity Theory	63
Self-Categorization Theory	65
Conclusion	76
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION	77
Native Women’s Self-Perceptions and the Media	78
Cultural Identity and Self-Perception	80
Self-Perception and Viewpoints of Native American Women	81
Strengths/Limitations	83
Future Research	84
Conclusion	85
REFERENCES	88
APPENDIX: NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN’S SELF-PERCEPTION IN RELATION TO MASS MEDIA PORTRAYALS	103

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

When one thinks of who they are, what comes to mind? Suddenly one's mind filters through a million qualities that they have. They begin to think about how their left thumb is shaped slightly different from their right; the freckle on their nose is just a bit too big. They may think about their skin tone, their hair color, and so on. After a moment, however, their mind switches to abstract concepts: What do they like to do? What do they absolutely loathe? What pushes them to do their best? Where did they come from? Although self-perceptions are composites of small snippets of one's life combined with how someone thinks other people view them, they are exceptionally important. For many people, knowing where they or their ancestors came from directly impacts who they think they are. This can be seen through the desire many adopted children have to reconnect with birth parents as they get older, and the popularity of genetic testing and family tree tracing through sites like 23 and Me and Ancestry.com. Humans are often characterized as social creatures and enjoy feeling as if they are a part of a larger whole. People want to be a part of an in-group.

Growing up in Virginia, I was no different than many, obsessed and delighted with the real-life stories that history gave me. I read every biography and autobiography in my elementary school library. I knew way more about historical figures, characters such as Abraham Lincoln, Betsy Ross, and George Washington, than I did about other parts of my heritage. For as long as I can remember, I've known that I was Native American, a member of the Patawomeck Tribe, a state-recognized tribe located in Fredericksburg, Virginia. I can remember being excited on craft days in the fall as we got to design "Indian" clothing and headpieces for Thanksgiving. As I grew older, Native Americans remained a focus of study in

my history classes. Whenever Pocahontas came up, I would share that, according to my family records, I was directly related to her through my Patawomeck heritage. My teachers would often dismiss my claims of my heritage.

As years went by, students began to make fun of me for something that I thought made me unique and interesting: my heritage. I had a connection to this character, Pocahontas. She was not only a topic in our class, but she had a Disney movie written about her! Why wouldn't I share that? Although it took me a while, I didn't realize exactly why they were laughing at me. Once someone finally explained, it made a lot more sense. I was too White. I just had to be lying because someone like me could never be of Native heritage. After being snickered at in the halls, being called nicknames such as Pocahontas, and being asked if I could identify all the colors in the wind, I eventually stopped sharing that part of myself. However, just because I stopped sharing my Native heritage doesn't mean that I wasn't intrigued by it. I often spent time reading my family history or trying to utilize the Internet to feel that connection to my roots through research. At this point, my self-perception was warped, not only about my Native heritage but about most things. At sixteen, I attempted to be the typical White girl who I thought everyone wanted to see. After all, that's what everyone believed I was. As a result, I became disjointed from my Native American heritage, often forgetting to mention it when asked to describe myself.

When I arrived at my undergraduate university, I didn't even consider joining the Native American student organization as I feared that I would be treated as too White once again, and even some students who were members of the organization made comments about my White appearance. However, after a push from my tribe chief and his wife, I became more active within the organization, never letting go of the fear that I would be questioned as a fraud. Throughout

my undergraduate degree and until now, I have explored what it means to be Native American and what my heritage means. I am in a sort of cultural limbo. My mother is small in stature with dark hair, dark piercing brown eyes, and darker skin, and my father has a lighter skin shade and light green eyes similar to mine. I was somehow too White to be a Native American and yet too Native to fully claim my European heritage. I was in between, yet I was nothing that people expected to see when they think of what or who an Indian is.

I began pulling up pictures of my mother to justify my Nativeness; her great-grandmother was a full-blooded Cherokee woman born and raised in East Tennessee; however, due to my geographic location and bloodline, I am Patawomeck. Both of my parents can trace lineage back through this tribe, and it is the Tribal culture that I grew up associating with. My grandmother was my image of a Native American woman, even though I wasn't even a member of the same tribe as her. After realizing that I could simultaneously be both Native and White, both an insider and an outsider, and each of my cultures, I was once again fascinated, just as I had been years ago as a child. At this point, I began taking more courses that were centered around diversity and specific cultures, such as Native American studies and Black culture.

In my senior year, I was tasked with a project that discussed communication in relation to minority groups. Naturally, my mind went to Native Americans and, even more specifically, Native American women. At this point, I had accepted that I would never fully fit into the White mold or the Native American mold, and that was okay. The project was centered around Native American women, which discussed the phenomenon of missing and murdered indigenous women across the United States and the lack of intervention by the US government. Following the project, I felt like I had finally found my niche in communication research. I was simultaneously writing this paper as I was debating going to graduate school, so it only felt right

that the writing sample I submitted to Illinois State University's graduate program was this paper. It was something I cared about deeply and something that fascinated me. I realized that I could use my words to tell a story about people who need help and attempt to change their lives for the better.

One thing that stood out to me was the representation of Native Americans, especially women, in the media, both in terms of misrepresentation and underrepresentation. Throughout the continuation of this argument, misrepresentation will describe ways in which Native Americans and other minority group members are falsely portrayed in media. The term underrepresentation will refer to the disproportionate representation of peoples based upon the overall U.S. population. This is distinct from misrepresentation: underrepresentation implies that there is representation of some kind, just at a disproportionately low amount. Finally, appropriation will refer to the usage of Native American or other cultural or ethnic traditions and rituals for non-traditional reasons, such as for fashion or economic gain.

From my previous research completed during my project about the high rates of missing and murdered Native American women, I knew that Native Americans were misrepresented in mainstream media. This led me to question whether there was a link between the lack of mainstream media representation and lower self-esteem in Native American women. I began to question how misrepresentation impacts someone's identity. More specifically, I began to attempt to understand how this affects those who are misrepresented, Native American women. By combining my previously researched knowledge about Native American women and my passion for mass media studies, I was able to conceive a study that involved both, while also attempting to explain a social phenomenon.

Most media have represented Native Americans in stereotypical ways, if at all, such as racist portrayals of them in parades, as school and professional sports team mascots, and in movies and television romanticizing the “wild west.” Rarely does a story get published about a Native American woman succeeding or, the exact opposite, going missing and being found dead. This is because minorities tend to be vastly underrepresented in most mass media. Native Americans present a unique issue in media: Because they make up less than three percent of the U.S. population, they are rarely represented in media, and when they are, they are often misrepresented (Merskin, 1998). Unlike those of Latin culture or Black culture, Native Americans are most often not discussed at all, even in a negative light. This lack of representation due to their small representation can be found in media and academic research as well; Native Americans merit more scholarly investigation as they are one of the smallest minorities in the United States, making up only 2.9% percent of the population in 2021 (Administration for Native Americans, 2021). In 2019, there were disproportionately more Native American men, causing Native American women specifically to only make up 0.7% of the U.S. population (Women of Color, 2021).

The American White dominant majority often imagine that Native Americans are still riding wild horses while wearing large headdresses (something only originally worn by certain tribes to begin with). False media misrepresentations may a key source of false impressions and assumptions that mainstream culture has of Native Americans, leading to a general lack of knowledge in concern to their race and culture. If mainstream media gave more positive and frequent portrayals of Native Americans, Native American youth would have more positive Native role models, allowing them to develop a more positive view of their culture and their fellow Native Americans (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Amnesty International USA, 2007;

Harman, 2017; Skewes & Blume, 2019; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2013). The misrepresentation of Native Americans within mainstream media directly affects many Native Americans' self-esteem (Porter & Washington, 1993). In turn, Native Americans have a more negative self-perception overall.

Although many Native Americans do still live on tribal lands, others are leading prosperous lives in some of America's largest cities, blending in with the dominant majority. This ability to live as members of the dominant White majority in the U.S. exemplifies how incorrect Native American stereotypes are. Those of Native heritage who live in less diverse communities are often poorer and are viewed in a more stereotypical light (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994). In addition to this, Native Americans face the highest rate of abuse across all types (Amnesty International, 2007; Lehavot et al., 2010) and are most likely to have substance abuse disorders than any other minority group (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Skewes & Blume, 2019). Due to the generational trauma that many Native American families face, it is important to break the cycle of abuse and therefore lowered self-esteem of women (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Cockerham, 1997; Porter & Washington, 1993; Ramasubramanian et al. 2017).

In 2016, a National Institute of Justice study found that 84.3% of Native women had faced violence in their lifetime, and 39.8% had experienced it within the year of 2015 alone (Rosay, 2016). Much of this violence occurs within romantic relationships, as 55.5% of Native women faced violence from an intimate partner, while only 25% of White American women did (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence). In a society in which all women despite racial background are still disadvantaged in comparison to men (Richardson & Taylor, 2009), minority women including Native American women are at an even higher risk to be discriminated against and unfairly treated.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the literature that supports a possible connection between self-perceptions and media, including but not limited to minority group membership, minority group depictions within mass media, Native American women depictions in both mass media and in Native media, the struggles, and traumas that many Native American women face, and Native Americans' self-perception. Through this discussion, I hope to explain why Native American women need to be included more in academic and cultural research and why it is so important that the United States take steps to protect Native Americans.

By conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with Native American women, I will be able to learn about their stories from their past and their present. By speaking directly with Native American women rather than conducting a survey or analyzing texts written by Native American women, I will be able to clarify what their statements mean, and this will allow me to better understand them as people as well as gain an idea of what it means to be a Native American woman.

Through this research, I hope to bring social change regarding Native American women and how they are viewed. Although I have never protested a pipeline or actively danced at the powwows that I've attended, this is my contribution to bring awareness of Native culture to academia and society at large. This project will help me better understand my heritage while also allowing me to give back to those I share it with. By being a part of the Native American community, I, as a researcher, have been given great insight into both personal identity and tribal identities alike. This may give me more insight to Native American Women's experiences and allow me to gain more trust with my participants. In turn, their stories will further my knowledge of Native American women's self-perception.

Through my research, I will critically examine narratives shared by Native American women during interviews to better understand their experiences, self-perception, and the relationship between their experiences and self-perception. I believe that my findings will add to existing research since, when I was gathering sources to create my literature review, many journal articles claiming to discuss minority group women's self-perception and self-esteem didn't even include Native American women in their research, including instead only Black and Latinx female participants.

Another reason why I feel my research is essential is that much research on Native Americans is from over 30 years ago, and it often discusses things such as Native American boarding schools. Although these schools have caused generational trauma, for younger Natives, these schools are now more of a legend, a scary story that is told in the dark by their grandparents both as a cautionary tale and to remind Native children of their people's resilience. Many Native people still live in more disadvantaged areas than the average population of the United States and Canada (Skewes & Blume, 2019), meaning they are less likely to seek higher education and can tell their own stories. Although this is changing, and more Native American students are graduating with high school in university degrees every year, it is important to me, as a Native woman who has the necessary education, to speak out on behalf of those who cannot and bring awareness to the issues that many Native Americans face every day.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Native American women are a marginalized group with multiple disadvantages working against them, negatively impacting all aspects of their life including social, economic, and health aspects. As Native American women fight multiple disadvantages, many of them have begun to feel hopeless and have a more negative self-perception and lower level of self-esteem (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994). A better understanding of how Native American women perceive themselves and what experiences shape their self-perceptions should lead to an increased understanding of how to improve Native American women's self-esteem and improve their overall self-perceptions and self-worth.

Guiding Theories

Self-categorization theory, social identity theory, and standpoint theory directly tie into the finding that often Native Americans identify with their Tribal Culture more closely than that of their Native heritage (Kopacz & Lee Lawton, 2011). The theories are relevant since the term Native American is about as broad as the continent of North America, reaching across many climates, cultures, and norms. Direct association with one clan or group directly affects a Native American's identity, values, and norms if they live on a reservation or interact with other tribal members on a regular basis.

Social identity theory states that individuals categorize themselves based upon their membership in different groups, such as an American teenager, a tribal member, and even a fan of their favorite band (Trepete & Loy 2017). Through this, individuals decide who is in their in-group, who they belong with due to certain traits such as racial, ethnic, or cultural identity, and who is in their outgroup, those who they do not belong with are, and which group(s) will be their “reference” group (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 2001). In assessing what groups, they are a

part of and which they are not, individuals are able to compare their social value and, in turn, form their perceived individual identity derived from their social identity, which directly affects their social worth. As a response to their place within groups (in-group or out-group) individuals may begin to do multiple things, including social mobility—behaviors as an individual’s attempt to gain a higher level of social standing—social creativity—boosting the image of their own group—or social competition—working for the social and political elevation of their group as a whole—in an attempt to gain a better self-comparison in relation to others (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). If an individual chooses to utilize social mobility as a tactic to increase their social value, they may begin associating with a more socially valuable group or begin to adopt the norms of the more socially valuable group that they are attempting to join (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). In terms of social creativity an individual may choose to modify in-group’s perception of them and their standing in society. Some people may choose to attempt to engage in social competition, seeking to elevate the actual status of their group as a whole, such as through activism or legislation (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Finally, when it comes to social categorization or comparison someone may choose to categorize themselves as a member of certain groups and then measure their group’s worth against that of a group of which they are an out-group member. Some out-group members may choose to utilize a form of social categorization to pass as a member of the in-group; this can be seen in race, sexuality and gender, and culture groups. The utilization of passing depends upon the premise that the individual doing so is believably a member of the in-group. For example, passing is often done by biracial individuals (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Williams-León, 2001) or by individuals who do not openly display traits of out-group members either through their appearance or actions (Oh, 2020).

As social identity is how one believes others see them, it is no surprise that one's sense of social worth is directly affected by it. For example, according to social identity theory, if a Native American woman with substance abuse issues perceives that other people view her as a failure, she is more likely to feel that she is worth less socially, likely accepting poorer treatment across all her relationships. Due to this connection, a more positive social identity would result in higher levels of self-esteem and a higher self-perception. This theory will help to inform how Native American women see their self-worth in general and specifically in relation to women.

Self-categorization theory illustrates the difference between one's social and personal identities. Unlike social identity theory, self-categorization theory provides insight into social and personal identity upon the premise that both social and personal identity processes work simultaneously (Trepte & Loy, 2017). It states that, depending upon the importance or type of situation, someone unconsciously chooses which identity they show, personal and social. In addition to this, one also chooses to show both identities simultaneously (Turner, 1999). This means someone can have multiple, overlapping identities, which makes them more complex overall. Self-categorization has been criticized for triggering intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as the entire concept of there being two groups innately places one group above the other (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). One notion useful for this study that self-categorization theory introduces is *maximum difference*, by which group members create large differences and gaps between groupings to set the groups apart from one another. Through maximum difference, it is more important to group members that they compete with the out-group, rather than the in-group they are a part of (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory is valuable as it will explain how Native American women view themselves in greater society, both concerning their Native American heritage but also every other aspect of themselves.

Standpoint theory states that each person's specific life experiences impact how they see situations in terms of ethics and morals as well as guide how they act and react. These are not simply their unique lived experiences, but those that depend upon their access to social and emotional experiences, knowledge, and understanding that they share with those who are at a comparable social level or similar co-cultural group as they are. The understanding of those with similar social positions can be attributed to the fact that, typically, people of the same social position view the world in the same ways, and some have even experienced many of the same things. Standpoint theory argues that one's perspective is not all-encompassing and cannot be generalized. Rather, as everyone is multifaceted, so are their views, opinions, and perspectives of the world as a whole (Harding, 2020). Although Native American women may share some common values and opinions, it is unlikely that they will share every single value and opinion as they have lived different lives and experienced different things. Even if some of these things were similar, it is unlikely that their views would reflect each other perfectly.

A part of one's standpoint may be how they see—and what they want to call—their own group. Labels, or what one's group is called, may also play a big part in how one sees themselves and their social worth. In terms of race, individuals situate themselves based upon how they see their group, and as many people are surrounded by media in their everyday lives, how the media presents specific minority groups may have a large impact on how those both in the minority group and out of the minority group view the group as a whole and how they evaluate individuals who are members of that group (Kinefuchi & Orbe, 2008). Over the years, Native Americans have been referred to most commonly as Native Americans or Indians within the media. According to standpoint theory, knowledge stems from one's social position (Harding, 2020). Therefore, if one associated the term Indian with having less respect from their peers

when compared to Native American. Then, if they were regularly referred to as an Indian, they may begin to believe that they deserve less respect than those of the White majority because of their perceived social position, exemplified by how people choose to describe or view them in larger society. When discussing preferred labeling, though, it is important to note that different people or communities may have different opinions on whether they prefer to be called Indians or Native Americans. As cultural identity theory discusses, through self-identification a sense of belonging to a group can be reaffirmed (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Therefore, a Native person may feel as though they are better connected with their heritage and tribal members by identifying as an Indian, rather than a Native American. As individuals use communication to construct and continuously negotiate their cultural identity and personal identity, how they choose to identify as a Native can change.

These three theories relate to one another to create a dynamic view of identity. As social identity theory displays how individuals categorize themselves based on what groups they are part of, as most people are a part of multiple groups come on often, they may need to display a certain part of their identity in certain situations, this is an aspect of self-categorization theory. When it comes to an individual's background and how they came to be a member of the groups that they are a part of, standpoint theory gives insight into why someone may act or choose to do things that they do. For example, do they morally believe that using the word Indian to describe America's Native people's is wrong? Overall, through better understanding what groups a person is a part of, how they feel those groups fit into their communities in terms of social value, the many identities of a person and how their identities shift based upon specific situations, and how a specific person's experiences have affected them a multidimensional overview of their identity can be formed. This potential identity overview can be further reinforced by one's perceived

identity. As a Native American myself, personally I have no preference between the two titles, Indian or Native American. This may be because within my own tribal nation we refer to ourselves as both Native American and Indian, using the two interchangeably. As my specific tribe uses the two interchangeably, I may view the terms as equal, whereas someone who's tribe only uses one term may view one as better or more preferred than the other.

As media has the power to shape viewers perceptions, it also assists in illustrating what groups are in and what groups are out, or at least perpetuates them (Ramasubramanian, 2011), Native American women and minority group members alike may feel as though they are not recognized by many, this aligns greatly with social identity theory as they may feel as Natives they are not as socially valuable as other groups. Situationally, Native American's self-perceptions may be skewed due to their experiences throughout their lives (standpoint theory), affecting what they feel their social value is), As well as how do they perceive themselves and how they believe others perceive them (self-categorization theory. Media can affect all three aspects of these theories as media not only affects the viewer but also those who the viewer interacts with. The three guiding theories also apply to the life situations faced by Native Americans. Social identity theory can provide insight into why someone may have lower self-esteem, for example if the were raised in poverty, their parents had substance abuse issues, and they accepted government assistance this person may feel that these groups are not socially desirable. When it comes to self-categorization theory, the individual may feel that they are destined for the same misfortune that their family has experience and create an identity within that, possibly choosing to partake in substance abuse and risky activates. Finally, in terms of self-categorization theory a person's lived experience create their unique world perspective, guiding their actions and reactions. In this situation discussed above this may include someone believing

that stealing was okay or at least not morally wrong if they had to steal food to survive as they did not have any in their home as all of the family's money went to feed their parent's substance abuse issues. Overall, what groups a person is a part of, how they perceive themselves, and what they've been through have large impacts upon their identities and greatly help to shape who they are.

Life Situations

Native Americans are over two times as likely to suffer substance abuse disorder than members of the general American population (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016). Within Native populations, the age-adjusted alcohol-related death rate was 520% greater than the average U.S. population, and the mortality rate from illicit drug use among Native Americans over the age of twelve was 22.7%, almost double that of the rest of the country's general population (Indian Health Service, 2014; Skewes & Blume, 2019). This can be attributed to multiple factors, including less hope for the future and lower socioeconomic status both in tribal communities and inner-city Native Americans (Skewes & Blume, 2019). The trauma faced by many Native Americans also directly affects these behaviors as there are higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder in Native American communities than anywhere else in the United States (Skewes & Blume, 2019). The cycle of abuse and drug abuse leads to generational trauma within Native communities and families alike. Self-esteem is directly impacted by trauma and how it is experienced. For this reason, substance abuse disorders have been linked to traumas experienced (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994). Therefore, it is not unusual for Native Americans to attempt to soothe their pain through an altered state of mind via drug and alcohol abuse.

It is no surprise that many Native Americans face the same traumas that other minority group members face. However, there are a few things that Native Americans tend to experience

more often or uniquely. These niche traumas experienced by Native Americans include things such as culture commodification, higher rates of abuse, and discrimination through unfair parental laws often resulting in children being taken from their parents and placed in the care of White families, group homes, or, in the past, boarding schools created specifically to make Natives act less Native (Primack, 2020). Native Americans may feel as though they are not in control of their own lives and only have so much influence when it comes to their children's lives. With memories of assimilation-based boarding schools, poor treatment by the United States government, and overall unfair treatment, many Native Americans feel they have nothing left to hope for, leading to increased substance abuse.

In the case of sexual and physical violence, Native American women experience these traumas at a higher rate than any other ethnic or racial minority group in the United States (Perry, 2004). For example, Native women over 12 years of age are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than all other women regardless of ethnicity or race (Perry, 2004). Physical assault rates are also higher within Native American communities, and Native American women are more likely to sustain a greater injury during rapes and sexual assaults; 50% of Native American women will experience serious injury in situations of rapes and sexual assaults (Amnesty International, 2007). These statistics rise dramatically when a person of Native descent is a two-spirit—a phrase commonly used for someone who is transgender in Native American communities. Two-spirited people are considered at high risk for physical and sexual abuse. Over 78% of two-spirited women have been physically assaulted, and 85% sexually assaulted, meaning that most transgender Native American women have faced some kind of assault in their lives (Lehavot et al., 2010). Still, research done specifically on abuse of racial minorities in the United States primarily tends to be limited to analyzing the experiences faced by Latinx and

Black women, not sharing Native American women's perspectives and stories when it comes to abuse (Bubar, 2013).

Minority Group Membership and the Media

False media portrayals of minority group members provide a fictionalized view of how minority group members live and act (Entman, 1994). In addition to the parodies, romanticizations, and dramatizations of minority group members' lives, they are repeatedly misrepresented on mainstream media platforms. (Rivadeneira et al., 2007; Weaver, 2016). The lack of representation of minority groups is also a major issue in films and popular television shows (Klein, 2018). Cultivation Theory gives insight into the messages produced by the media and how these messages, their symbolic functions, contribute to social systems to shape individuals' assumptions about life and the world overall (Gerbner, 1973; Potter, 2014). As mass media messages form culture, the public's exposure to these messages directly affects their actions and beliefs as a whole (Gerbner, 1973). Media allow for the mass dissemination of stories across a society. The sharing of these stories is how culture is both shared and accepted, and, even further, is reinforced by familial and communal social norms (Gerbner, 1998). The production of mass media has directly affected American culture and create a widespread meaning (Gerbner, 1998; Potter, 2014). For example, Lee et al. (2007) found that the amount of television consumed, and the genre consumed by college students, directly affected the ethnic stereotypes that they held. Mass media portrayals have had a direct effect on minority groups through misrepresentation, underrepresentation, and lack of representation of these groups. In terms of underrepresentation, mass media show LatinX individuals at drastically low rates when compared to that of the U.S. population (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2002).

When it comes to misrepresentation in mass media, Asian Americans and those of Asian heritage were found to be perceived as the most likely racial-ethnic group in the U.S to achieve academic success, most likely to be considered nerds, and most likely to be left-out, and, as a result of this, many people reported that they were least likely to initiate friendships with those of Asian ethnicity (Zhang, 2010). These actions appeared directly related to media perpetuate an image of Asian Americans (Zhang). In terms of lack of representation, one longitudinal study analyzing portrayals of women in popular television shows found that media ignore many groups of women, including Native American women, Asian women, and women of the LGBTQ+ community (Greenberg & Worrell, 2007). Overall, cultivation describes the perceptions both creating stereotypical opinions of minority group members as well as portraying that those who are not shown within media are not important or do not exist. U.S. media's magnification of the narratives and norms of dominant culture and disproportionate portrayal of minorities can imply that the minority groups are not important or a part of U.S. culture, something that is not at all true.

The classical stereotypical portrayals of minority group members within mass media include but are not limited to the savage Native American, the ignorant Black, the perfect and intelligent Asian, the terrorist Middle Eastern or even Indian person, and the out-of-touch foreigner. These tropes have been used frequently. In them, the minority character commonly provides comedic relief within a scene typically dominated by White characters, acts as a damsel in distress to show the White character's courage or compassion, or is demonized and acts as a direct enemy to the White characters.

American Blacks in Mass Media

The character archetype of the White savior who is above their Black subordinate intellectually and economically is reminiscent of the way that White masters felt about their Black slaves. Black slaves worked for slave owners often for nothing beyond small meals and terror. The White slave masters were so disconnected from reality that they believed that their slaves were people that they were helping. Even children's movies are not safe from the prejudice and stereotypes deeply ingrained within White American Society. This pattern of weak, less developed, and often one-dimensional characters manifests itself beyond the Black minority group. Characters of all minority groups, including Native Americans, people of Asian heritage, Black people, and people of Middle Eastern descent are less well-rounded and often are based around their minority group membership and ethnic background (Ellithorpe et al., 2018). Often in mainstream media, Black characters appear Whitewashed to make them more palatable to the White viewers. By giving Black protagonists more traditionally White features mass media are not only displaying that somehow White features are better, but they are also showing that White people would prefer to view someone who looks like them. Another common approach to the portrayal of Black characters is an extreme exaggeration of common Black stereotypes.

Across a variety of media, Black characters are consistently exaggerated to fit the stereotypical view of dominant media. One study found that, in video games, Black avatars displayed increased aggression when compared to that of White avatars (Ash, 2015). When it came to television shows, media presented Black women negatively much more often than their White counterparts (Freeman, 2018; Christiano, 2017). Finally, movies often portray Black male characters either as heroes or as violent criminals, reinforcing two very common stereotypes, that the dominant culture has of Black men specifically (Kocić, 2017).

One example of the exaggerated stereotype character can be found in traditional Disney movies, such as Sunflower, a character found in *Fantasia* (Lacroix, 2004), an early Disney film still revered as one of Disney's classics. In older animated films, Black characters are often dehumanized, being portrayed as animals. This animated, animalistic characterization of Black characters can be found in Disney's controversial 1946 film, *Song of the South* (Lacroix, 2004), and even through small details such as the character, Jim Crow, in *Dumbo* (Lacroix, 2004).

As another example, in local news coverage, African Americans are frequently depicted negatively and have even been described as a "source of crime and chaos" (Dixon, 2004, p. 137; Entman, 2020; Hurley et al., 2015; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). Within Dixon's (2004) study, African American female journalists were aware of the stereotypes that were believed about them as well as those believed about other minority group members and their communities. The same female African American journalists how the communities around them often reflected the known stereotypes of Black citizens. The women commented that while they were working to change opinion on harmful stereotypes, their communities often reflected harmful stereotypes. As a result of this, they felt that their efforts were to no avail.

Asian Americans in Mass Media

Media also target those of Asian descent through popular animated films created by Disney. In the film short *Commando Duck* (Lacroix, 2004), Japanese soldiers are portrayed with slanted eyes and large buck teeth. Asian characteristics are also the butt of the joke in the musical number "We are Siamese," a song in the film *Lady and the Tramp* (Lacroix, 2004). The villainous cats alluding to the conflicts in World War II are drawn with the same characteristics used in *Commando Duck*: They are short, with slanted eyes and buck teeth.

The term *model minority* was first used in a *New York Times* article in 1966 to acknowledge Asian Americans' achievements compared to those of other American minority groups (Peterson, 1966). Following this, Asian Americans have been depicted in a positive light when it is beneficial to the dominant culture, including media depictions of Asian characters as model citizens who would help propel the United States to succeed. Asian American children are still frequently presented as mathematical, intelligent, and afraid to fail, though media stereotypes of Asian American parents portray them as harsh and often cold (Cuddy et al., 2007).

The model-minority stereotype is harmful as it breeds resentment between Asian Americans and the dominant White majority in the U.S. As media implies that typically Asian Americans get into every school they apply for, including top universities such as Harvard, many dominant group members may view Asian Americans as direct competition. Many Whites assume that Asian Americans are taking away opportunities and using their levels of intelligence to gain an unfair advantage over the White community. The notion that exceptionally intelligent Asian American students may take opportunities away from White Americans can lead to a feeling of distrust. As a result of these stereotypical storylines and misconceptions, Asian Americans have in many ways become the antagonist of the dominant majority group's White protagonist.

Women in Mass Media

These representational problems also apply to women. Gender bias, specifically, can be found in media through the misrepresentation and underdevelopment of female characters. In 1993, Kray found that female characters of Jewish descent on television shows and films were often less developed than their White male counterparts and appeared to be ignored, and unchosen.

When it comes to the physical traits of women, popular media producer Disney created all their female heroines in the form of small delicate women up until as recently as Lacroix' analysis in 2004. Disney's Princess Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* is represented as a woman who is 5'2 and a mere 95 pounds (Lacroix, 2004). Disney characters portrayed as the hero often retained many White features despite their skin tone and country of origin. For example, Princess Jasmine, an Arabian Princess in the film *Aladdin*, is not only voiced by a blonde-haired, blue-eyed White woman, Linda Larkin, but the character of Jasmine also retains a delicate nose and tiny mouth, characteristics of a conventionally attractive White woman. In every right, besides her skin tone, Jasmine appears to be a White woman despite her cultural and ethnic background, which is deeply intertwined with the story being told. When it comes to Native Americans, Disney's Pocahontas received multiple responses from critics, who stated that the body frame used in the movie was abnormal for that of a girl of 12, the age that the real Pocahontas was when John Smith came to America. Critics compared the animated character's frame to that of a Barbie doll, a well-developed woman, something that Pocahontas most certainly was not at the age of 12 (Edgerton & Jackson, 1996). This theme of conventionally attractive White women costumed in a darker skin tone continues throughout almost all Disney films. Although the film *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) was not released when Lacroix (2004) published her article, Lacroix' observation holds true. Princess Tiana and her prince appear as Black characters; however, they are light-skinned and retain many White features such as smaller noses; smaller mouths; and straight, untextured hair.

These harmful and false media depictions can also be seen in modern beauty standards across the globe, as White traits are typically considered the most beautiful, and many minority group women choose to wear wigs, hair extensions, and colored contacts to imitate White

standards. Other women may choose to use lightening creams and have cosmetic surgery to reach the appearance that they desire (Zhang, 2012). In Zhang's (2012) study of women of Chinese descent, mass media portrayals directly affected their body image and how they viewed their appearance. Zhang argued that mass media had such an influence on these women because it provided them with the definition of female beauty, whether that was subtle traditional Chinese beauty or the more open and sexy western beauty (2012). The racism towards Asian women motivates many of them to choose to starve themselves or undergo surgical procedures to change their traditional features to appear more like a White person (Zhang, 2012). Chinese women choose common cosmetic surgeries to include double eyelid surgeries, nose implants, and lip plumpers and fillers (Gilman, 1999).

Although it cannot be confirmed whether media is causing these trends or women are just echoing social norms within U.S. culture, minority women are treated unfairly in many aspects of their lives including the workplace. In 2020, Freeburg found that minority group women are disproportionately paid less than their White female counterparts, who were, in turn, paid even less than their male counterparts. In addition, minority group females face discrimination at higher levels than their male counterparts (Mungarary & Curtin, 2021). These findings illustrate some of the many reasons why women often struggle to gain and maintain leadership roles in their organizations. Richardson and Taylor (2009) found that when subordinates and supervisors question a woman's leadership capabilities, they often mention her race, whereas this was not the case with males' leadership capabilities. The participants in their study discussed males' leadership capabilities similarly, without mentioning their race despite their racial profiles (2009). These findings illustrate everyday examples of how minority group women are treated

unfairly while also reinforcing the commonly portrayed media theme that minority group women are less than their White counterparts (Wilhelm & Joeckel, 2019).

Even minority group women who are directly involved in the media business cannot seem to foster equal representation of minorities. Although newsrooms are choosing to become more diverse with their growing staff of minority group members since 1990 (The Radio Television Digital News Association, 2020), minority group members were still employed at lower rates than their White counterparts at 26.6% of the television workforce in 2020 (The Radio Television Digital News Association, 2020).

Effects of False Representation of Minority Groups in Media

When minority group members are constantly bombarded by mainstream media messages portraying them in incorrect ways, they typically have lower self-esteem and a more negative self-concept (Matsaganis et al., 2011; Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). As media consumer identities are based on what we see depicted, it is difficult to correctly perceive ourselves if there are only a few portrayals of ethnic and cultural minority group members—and those provided are stereotypical. As mass media typically portray a White perspective of society and intergroup social norms, minority group members can be negatively affected.

Diversity in media is vital, and often television and movies perform better with viewers when the cast is more diverse beyond a majority of White Characters (Klein, 2018). However, if one minority group member is a part of an otherwise all-White cast, diversity has an adverse effect because, if there is no obvious antagonist, viewers will most likely view the minority group member(s) on the show negatively, as this is what White viewers are typically most comfortable with (Ellithorpe, 2018; Mastro, 2003). A key aspect of mass media films and shows is that, regardless of the type of show being watched, science fiction or reality television, if there

is no obvious in-group and out-group, minority group members default to being the out-group in viewers' minds (Ellithorpe, 2018). As a result, viewers tend to advocate for justice less for minority group members than dominant majority group members and view them in a less positive light in general (Ellithorpe, 2018; Kellner & Share, 2005).

Research supports the link between media representation and self-esteem. For example, Maestro (2003) found that self-esteem and self-identity of minority group members are directly affected by mainstream media representation (Mastro, 2003). Specifically, participants favored members of the in-group as innocent rather than the out-group after exposure to criminal activity on television. Through the participants' tendency to view out-group members as guilty over in-group members, the overall results in Mastro's study display that media content reinforces self-esteem through the process of social contrast, in which participants favor in-group members rather than out-group members.

In another study concerned with minority group member self-esteem and media representation done in 1993, Porter and Washington found that minority group membership caused both lower and higher self-esteem, depending on the racial group one identified with. Because of the mixed findings in terms of minority group members' relationship with individual self-esteem, a direct singular relationship between group membership and self-esteem cannot be confirmed from the research conducted by Porter and Washington (1993). Specifically, they found that minority group members typically have a positive group identity if they have an increased identification with others of the same minority group.

One possible reason why Porter and Washington (1993) were unable to find concrete findings is because they attempted to generalize minority groups, lumping them together and labeling them simply as minority group members rather than studying individual minority groups

such as individuals who are Black (Hughes et al., 2015), Asian (Dong et al., 2015), or Native American (Hoffman et al., 2021) as more recent research has. More recent research focusing on the relationship between self-esteem and minority group membership displays that the clearer perception that a minority group member has of their own identity and culture, the higher their self-esteem (Gonzales-Backen et al., 2015; Usborne & Taylor, 2010). This direct positive relationship between cultural identity clarity and self-esteem was found across diverse backgrounds including Anglophone Quebecers, Francophone Québécois, Chinese North Americans, and Aboriginal Canadians.

Being a minority group member often brings with it a feeling of otherism, the feeling of exclusion of someone based upon their perceived differences or diversion from what is considered the social norm. This othering of people who do not appear to be like the common majority often causes them, the out-group members of society, to identify even more with their minority group as they have been rejected from the majority group. In the case of the United States, the dominant majority are citizens of a White, Anglo-Saxon ethnic and cultural heritage. Ethnic loyalty to minority group culture continues among some members of minority racial and ethnic groups within the United States even when cultural awareness declines over generations (Connor 1977; Masuda et al., 1970). Despite conscious efforts on the part of many government entities and private corporations to include more minority members in their ad campaigns and among their business employees, many still put minority group members within a box (Allen, 2017; Johri et al., 2018). This confines minority group members to a limited set of characteristics or common stereotypes that are easily referenceable. Said characteristics are often unprogressive despite the many efforts of diversity, inclusion, and equity campaigns occurring within the United States over the last 20 or so years.

Responses to Misrepresentations of Minority Groups in Media

One way that minority group members may choose to deal with the stereotypical portrayals in the media is through self-categorization. Research findings suggest that, as individuals self-categorize (Liu & Zhang 2011; Lee & Hecht, 2010), prejudice and likelihood for viewers to see a division between White and minority characters in the media increases (Simon et al., 1997). Through this change in their thought process, minority group members can change and reshape their feelings towards their minority group membership. Self-categorization can bring members of the same minority group together. In one study, as minority group members sought change, they found similarities between their lives and experiences and began to support one another as they faced ostracization from the dominant White majority (Saleem et al., 2021).

Through the unique experiences of minority group members and their shared resistance against misrepresentation and stereotyping, minority group members are better able to view and present one another as multifaceted individuals rather than as a people with a limited set of characteristics, as the dominant majority tends to see them. An immediate assumption may be that minority group members want to be a part of the in-group and that minority group members have a more depersonalized self-perception; however, this is not always the case. In one study (Saleem et al., 2021), when in-group identification meaningfulness was high, out-group identification meaningfulness was much lower. If minority group members felt accepted by their minority group, culture, or tribe they essentially cared much less about the dominant majority's opinions and false stereotypes of them.

Recently minority group members are choosing to advocate for fair media coverage (Saleem et al., 2021); however, change is unlikely as there are so few minority journalists and producers (Entman, 1994; The Radio Television Digital News Association, 2020). In 2004,

African American female journalists agreed that there is prejudice throughout local news coverage; yet, despite this, they believe their communities truly reflected those prejudices and stereotypes, and, although they wish to fight the misconceptions about their race, they ultimately admitted that they were uncomfortable doing so, as much of the actions completed by minority group members in their area reinforced the stereotypes and negatively impacted other minority group members in the same local area (Dixon, 2004). Although the African American women journalists within the study did have a hard time fighting the stereotypes perceived about Black Americans, they reported being as professional and polished in the workplace as possible to show the public and their coworkers that these false stereotypes portrayed on the *Dallas Morning News* were false and exaggerated.

Another way that minority group members are attempting to combat these stereotypes is through the creation of ethnic media. Ethnic media are created by minority group members to combat skewed representations of minority groups (Matsaganis et al., 2011). In addition to this, ethnic media are often created by minority group members for other minority group members to view. Some examples of ethnic media appear in Black Entertainment Television (BET), *Latina Magazine* and the newspaper, *Indian Country Today*. However, often these outlets have far less reach and receive less funding than mainstream media outlets that serve the dominant White majority within the United States.

Native Americans in Media

Some may believe that Native Americans in media are often misrepresented. However, sometimes minority group members, like Native Americans, are purposefully left out of media portrayals as a form of symbolic annihilation. Symbolic annihilation can be defined as the absence of reputation or underrepresentation of a group of people based upon a certain

characteristic such as race, sexuality, and socio-economic status (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Symbolic annihilation often enforces the social inequality of minority groups and their members. Symbolic annihilation displays how media messages contribute to the views that people may have of those who have been symbolically annihilated. For example, analyzing symbolic annihilation through an economics perspective, a traditionally masculine field, it has been found that women are disproportionately represented and identified both by women and men in the economics field (Harp et al., 2013). Animated cartoons also have a history of symbolically annihilating and underrepresenting out-groups (Klein & Shiffman, 2009).

Native Americans are among one of the many out-groups that have been symbolically annihilated in media, and this annihilation has greatly affected how people in the dominant group perceive them. In some ways Native Americans have even been symbolically annihilated within identity research, which does not even include or portray them in studies that are centered around minority groups. As there is so little representation, according to cultivation theory, this cultivates the belief that Native Americans are not a part of overall U.S. culture. When they are represented, they are typically only represented in stereotypical ways. This may be because some Natives can pass as White. However, this too is an issue because, without any representation, Native Americans cannot be recognized even in a false light.

Native Americans have been sensationalized since one of the earliest forms of media, newspapers. Historically, book authors and journalists labeled Native Americans as good or bad due to stereotypical portrayals spread by mainstream media. They are portrayed either as refined and assimilated people who acted just like the White settlers or, if they disagreed in any way or stood up for their way of life or their land, as savages. Newspapers portrayed these "savages" as people to be feared and ultimately eradicated (Büken, 2002). Today, the false representations and

stereotypes of Native Americans that mainstream media reinforces are spread through cartoons, news, social media, radio, and other genres and channels.

When it comes to Native American women in mass media, not only are they misrepresented, but they are also extremely understudied in academic research. The word *squaw* framed Native American women as the more intelligent and driven gender; therefore, use of the term implied that Native American men were lazy, dumb, and messy by commending the Native American woman for doing so much and implying that the men did not complete their fair share of the work (Merskin, 2010).

Native American men have been falsely portrayed as well. They are viewed as violent and angry, physically injuring people and threatening any disagreement with violence (Bird 1999; Merskin, 2010). Native Americans have been represented as noble savages (Dickens, 2016), magical shamans (Aldred, 2000), and alcoholics (Pacific Standard, 2017). The fetishization of Native Americans and their culture has also been seen throughout the media. Often, Native American culture is utilized by writers and authors for content as they know viewers will be intrigued. However, these writers, many of whom claim to be feminists, ignore and dismiss ethics when it comes to Native cultures (Donaldson, 1999). This fetishization can also be displayed in the capitalization that certain business sometimes associated with Native Americans do through falsely intensifying the *otherworldliness* or *magic* that many associate with Native American culture. An example of this can be seen in how Native American Casinos use cultural appropriation and exaggeration to draw tourists to them for economic gain (Cooks & Simpson, 2007).

In addition to traditional media misrepresentations, Native American culture has inspired costume wear, specifically within the prop rooms of many production companies. War bonnets,

eagle feathers, tomahawks, teepees, totem poles, fringed buckskin, and moccasins have become what many Americans associate with Native culture, adding further to the social norm of culturally appropriating and fetishizing Native American culture. However, the costume designers and actors wearing these outfits and utilizing the props often do not even know their purpose or meaning within Native American culture (Büken, 2002). In his discussion of the iconology used in mainstream media to represent what an Indian is, Büken (2002) asks, "To what extent does one become an Indian by playing Indian?" (p. 48). Simultaneously, it is easy to see that mainstream media misrepresents Native Americans and Native culture.

Native American culture has been used by the dominant culture for economic gain through the commodification of Native culture through the use of Native American tribal names or terms for sports team mascots. Generally, Native stereotypes promote traditionally masculine traits and a feeling of otherworldliness and escapism (Kemper, 2014). Many mainstream media viewers also believe that Native Americans have what can be considered to have a fighting spirit and pride in their tribe. Athletic departments and professional sports teams have found that the stereotypical traits of Native Americans appealed to their audiences and chosen to capitalize economically and socially from Native Americans and their culture, choosing Native American terms and figures as mascots throughout the history of sports in the United States. Negative ramifications that Native Americans face due to Indian mascots include disrespect for their culture through incorrect dress, cultural appropriation, and an apparent lack of concern on the part of the general population for Native American and tribal-related issues, including lack of research in academic spaces (Davis, 2002). Native American mascots often display some of the most harmful Native stereotypes in the media. Due to the popularity of professional and college athletics in the U.S., many viewers may assume that these mascot costumes and traits are direct

reflections of Native American culture. The most ironic part of the utilization of mascots can be seen in the almost ritualistic acts present in many sporting events: Fans don the same colors each week, chants are the same, players have beloved and consistent nicknames, and mascots represent the fun and frustration that a sports game provides. This ritualistic behavior is something that many associate with Native American culture has been adopted by the dominant White culture that is in most cases the in-group (Chidester, 2012).

Effects of Misrepresentations of Native Americans in Media

Due to the misrepresentation and lack of representation in mass media channels, many Native Americans feel they do not belong in a world beyond their reservation, or that they should hide their Nativeness if possible. Thus, many Native Americans stay in their communities living in poverty, continuing a cycle of generational trauma. If Native American youth were able to see more Native adults succeeding and making an impact, it is likely that their perception of reality and what is possible for themselves would expand. One study found that Native American primary school students did not have role models within their lives. In addition to this, these students felt a lower sense of belonging in school. However, a few Native American students within the study answered that they did have many role models. Native students with many role models were much more like their White student counterparts regarding a sense of belonging within their school (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2014).

When it comes to a sense of belonging, it makes sense why Native American students feel like outsiders, because in many ways, throughout their lives, they are always the outsiders. Many Native Americans feel as though they are stuck between poor economic and social realities due to the state of our tribal communities and the low expectations that not only the general population has for them but the ones that their family members have, as well (Covarrubias &

Fryberg ,2014). Within his book, *The True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Sherman Alexie, notable Native American author and artist, describes this in the way that the main character, Junior, states: "But we reservation Indians don't get to realize our dreams. We don't get those chances or choices. We're just poor. That's all we are" (Alexie, 2009, p. 13). Through this, Alexie shows a glimpse into the hopelessness that many Native Americans feel. This hopelessness illustrates a divide between present-day Native American culture and mainstream American culture as hoping for a better future and aiming for the American dream are still things that White Americans actively do. To Native Americans, the American dream is dead; and for many, it never even existed.

Harmon (2017) found that many Native Americans, including children, feel as though they are misunderstood, misrepresented, and discriminated against, and this directly affects their self-esteem. This breeds a sense of otherism, and, specifically in educational spaces, educators and administrators must use caution when they form messages about Native American culture and history. If teachers or administrators spread incorrect information about Native culture, other students of different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds may view the Native American child incorrectly. Majority group membership also provides a direct effect on self-esteem. A more dated study (Cockeringham, 1979) found that in Native American student majority schools, Native students typically had higher levels of self-esteem than any other minority group of the school (White, Black, and Latinx children). When minority group students see those in the dominant culture perceive and treat them differently, possibly ostracizing and excluding them for their differences, this may be a way in which the minority group gains a sense of control.

Self-esteem also directly affects suicide attempt rates. Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) report that Native American students perceive a high amount of discrimination. This

discrimination can reinforce a feeling of lack of belonging, which increases suicide attempt rates and the suicide numbers associated with Native American youths. In fact, Native American students were significantly more likely to have attempted suicide than their White student counterparts. Harman (2017) argues that an increased feeling of Native American tribal affiliation and active membership in the tribe greatly decrease the chance of suicide, as Native American students who are active in their tribal community have greater self-esteem than their White counterparts.

Identifying with a specific cultural group continues to positively affect Native Americans as they move into adolescence and adulthood. When studying Native American undergraduate students, Thompson and Johnson-Jennings (2013) found that high levels of coping with discrimination and a positive view of one's cultural group positively affected collective self-esteem and persistence among students. These findings reinforced that students who have higher collective self-esteem for their cultural group tend to adjust better to college life. Not only are these students more likely to have higher self-esteem and to be more flexible to adjustments, but they are also more likely to become positive community role models within the Native American community with their success (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

Native American Responses to Misrepresentation in Media

Similar to other minority groups, Native Americans are typically the subject of media rather than participants in its creation (Merskin, 1998). However, they have attempted to combat the many skewed representations. By creating their own sources as a result of a lack of media representation, Native Americans have begun to produce the news and information they want to hear. As a response, Native Americans produce Native American news sources staffed by Native American journalists. By having Native Americans, themselves, report and publish news,

communities can be more certain that the news they are receiving aligns with their culture and values.

As with other minority groups, Native Americans have taken steps to resist or contradict the dominant cultural representations and uses of Native culture. The first Native American newspaper, *The Cherokee Phoenix*, was created over 190 years ago in Georgia and was printed in both English and Cherokee (Murphy, 2010). Since *The Cherokee Phoenix's* inception, Natives have created many new sources specifically for Native Americans, including print, electronic, web media, and even social media. Native Americans have created Native American ethnic media to better serve their own Native American communities. These media often focus on one specific tribe or may not be as accessible for Native Americans who live outside of common tribal areas such as cities or along the East Coast, where there are no longer any Native American reservations. Tribal members may be scattered without a common thread between them.

Another example of ethnic Native American media can be found in the radio shows created by Native Americans, for Native Americans, and about Native Americans. Despite the fall of popularity of radio shows across the U.S., they are still one of the main sources of news and entertainment for many Native Americans (Wilbritch, 2019). The popularity of these radio shows in Native communities depends on multiple factors. First, many Native American communities are still located in remote areas, often only having one grocery store and lacking entertainment sources, access to good education and other infrastructure (Broome, 1995). In addition to this, gathering around the radio to listen to a radio show is a tradition to some Natives and many people are not ready to give up on it. In addition to this, Native Americans have had a complex relationship with White Americans since the beginning of colonialism. Therefore, they often do not trust the U.S. federal government and even their state's government. This means

that, often, even if there are better or more entertaining options, Native Americans may choose to listen to a Native American-produced radio show as they know that the content is geared towards their culture and lifestyle. When asked why they preferred Native American radio shows to other more mainstream radio shows, Native Americans reported that the Native American radio shows provide them with unbiased news, feeling that it has no ulterior motive behind it (Wilbricht, 2019). In Native American radio shows and newspapers alike, Native Americans are talked about, just as they are on more mainstream media platforms. However, the difference is that Native media do not impose the stereotypes on Native Americans based upon their ethnic, cultural, or racial backgrounds. In addition, local community radio stations allow for the spread of information, including essential information such as weather, health and safety, and local news (Wilbritch, 2019). Some Native American local radio stations provide insight into potential economic and educational opportunities either within the community or near it. The spreading of health and safety awareness on Native American tribal lands has been a key initiative of many government organizations and nonprofit organizations alike. Overall, tribal media fulfill a need for Native American people. Tribal media allow for indigenous voices and concerns to be heard and provide a sense of collective identity for the Native American minority group, bringing together people through "shared languages, cultural norms, community initiatives, activism, and other tribal interests" (Wilbricht, 2019, p. 45).

Art is also being used as a response to stereotypical Native portrayals. Individual Native American artists are working towards dispelling stereotypes and correcting falsified information using multiple platforms to show what real Indians are like, not just the Hollywood version or historic photos from over 200 years ago. Artists such as Alex Jacobs, Charlene Teters, and Sherman Alexie define the traditionally accepted image of what a Native American is by creating

so-called "complicated installations" that cause viewers to question all they know about Native people (Büken, 2002). By defying the stereotype that many Americans have seen through mass media for hundreds of years, including Hollywood blockbusters, advertisements, and depictions of Native Americans and literature, these artists are impacting how Native Americans are perceived. Through their work, the artists show that Native Americans are not all the same. Each tribe has its unique traditions and legends, and viewers will be able to understand that Native American tribes are unique despite the racial background that many Natives share.

Native-based media is not unique to Native Americans in the U.S.: Native tribal groups across the world such as those in Australia have also created their media for their people. Like in the U.S., these Native tribes have found ways to directly use the dominant majority's fascination with their culture for tribal benefit. Through both Native American self-created media and Australian Native self-created media, Native peoples can question national self-images and their self-images as the first people through self-representation, removing bias and prejudice (Alber & Churn, 2013). Canada, as well, parallels the U.S. both in treatment of Native Americans and Native-made media to resist that treatment. Canadians also have stereotypical opinions of Native Americans and often share the misconception that all Native Americans have either been eradicated or continue to live in village-like settings shut off from the outside world (Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016). The First Nations of Canada Women have adapted shows such as the popular game show *America's Next Top Model* to a more Native-centered *North America's Next Top Indian Model*. This specific self-created media challenges the beauty standards of mainstream North American and encourages models to accentuate and be confident in their Native traits, rather than trying to hide them to please those outside of their culture. Other videos created by the First Nations of Canada Women include educational videos such as *The People vs.*

Mary Moses and *The K-Net Story* (Perley, 2008). Still, despite the progress that has been made in terms of ethnic media in terms of Native Americans, many media depictions of Natives remain "steeped in the language of conquest and colonization" (Moscatto, 2016, p. 40).

The Current Study

The current study seeks to understand the relationship between Native American Women's self-perceptions as a result of their lived experiences and perception of how Native women are portrayed in dominant media. The specific relationship being studied in relation to Native American Women and their self-perceptions as a result of their lived experiences and perception of how Native women are portrayed in dominant media is the connection between how Native American Women are portrayed within mainstream media and how others treat them as a result. Because of this treatment, whether it is as an out-group member or an in-group member, Native American women will negotiate their social value and therefore derive their self-worth from that. Cultivation of ideas about Native American women (specifically, through symbolic annihilation) will likely affect Native American Women's self-perceptions, whether the Native American Women themselves consume the false media portrayals or not, through a trickle-down effect caused by these beliefs and false representations.

The research above establishes the connection between minority group members and mainstream media and also displays a connection between lower self-esteem and the viewing of negative minority group member portrayals. In terms of role models, it is likely that if Native American women had positive images of Native American Women to identify with, either within media, their community, or their social circle, they would perceive themselves to have a higher social value. If in fact more Native American Women were displayed in media, the dominant culture would recognize and accept them. This recognition of Native American Women in media

as well as the increase of Native American female role models would also help to raise Native American Women's self-esteem, heighten their social value, and provide them with a higher sense of belonging and possibly even a feeling of being a member of the dominant group.

The above issues and experiences of Native Americans and specifically Native American women are outlined to display why the study is necessary and how it will add insight into the Native American female experience. An analysis of the relationship between media and Native American women's self-perception through the stories of Native American women will provide increased understanding of how the cultivation of false media portrayals and, more often, lack of any portray affect modern Native American women today. Media often present Native American women in frames of mystery and absence, creating a cycle of them being forgotten and reduced to a stereotype. Although negative media images impact women's self-esteem, few studies have analyzed how Native American women specifically are impacted by media, as well as how they may choose to present their Nativeness. Through the present study I hope to further knowledge about the Native American experience and Native American women's self-perceptions. The areas of research guiding the present study include:

- Native American women's self-perception as it relates to mass media portrayals
- How Native American women negotiate their cultural identities and self-perception both within their in-group culture and their out-group culture
- How a Native American woman's negotiation of self-perception changes when discussing group membership

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how Native American women's experiences are shaped by their experiences and life situations and how popular media portrayals reinforce stereotypical

views of Native American culture, deeply affecting how both Natives perceive themselves as well as how those outside of their culture perceive them. The next chapter will outline and explain the methodology of the currently study as well as its guiding theories.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how I planned to gain an understanding of Native American women's self-perception in relation to mass media portrayals. In recognizing that Native American women are often forgotten both in mainstream media as well as academic research, I chose to focus my efforts on attempting to better understand Native American women's experiences. Through my study, I will illuminate concerns that Native American women have in relation to mainstream media and attempt to explain how mainstream media depictions inform how Native American women see themselves and their culture. I intended to value women's perceptions, meanings, and experiences (Foss & Foss, 1994). I planned to do this through respondent interviews (Tracey, 2019). By performing interviews, I felt that I would be better able to add to prior research focusing on Native American women and their unique experiences. Often, women do not get the opportunity to tell their own stories and have them valued. Even less often do Native American women get this opportunity. Within my research, not only do I hope to provide new knowledge on Native American women's self-perception, but I also hope to validate the lived experiences of my participants.

Throughout the argument in the review of literature, Native Americans can be seen as outsiders, not only within dominant U.S. culture but also within the subculture of minority groups within the U.S. This can be seen through their media representation and how Native Americans are severely understudied in Academic research. Through the present study I hope to further knowledge about the Native American experience and Native American women's self-perceptions.

Participants

Using purposive sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017), I recruited participants through network sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017), with an overall goal of reaching a maximum variation sample (Lincoln & Guba 1985) among participants who met the criteria of the study. I also employed criterion sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Individuals who satisfied the commonly understood definition of Native American women over the age of 18 who are members of a state or federally recognized tribe were included in this study. Specifically, to gain a maximum variation sample of those who identify as Native American Women, I sought participants who are members from diverse industries and different age groups, geographical areas, socioeconomic status, and tribal affiliations. As criteria for inclusion, all participants are members of a state or federally recognized tribe within the United States. This allowed me to confirm both Native American heritage and connection to participants' Native American culture. All participants within the study identified as female as the study specifically assesses women's self-perceptions. I spoke with Native American Women who currently reside on a Native American reservation or have in the past, as well as Native American Women who do not currently live on reservation lands and have never lived on reservation lands in the past. Although differences among participants may make it appear that there is no unifying characteristic between all participants, they are all Native American Women. By utilizing a maximum variation sample for this study I was able to gather perspectives regarding the self-perception of Native American Women from a variety of backgrounds, different in aspects including but not limited to the location they spent their developmental years, where they currently reside, their tribal affiliation, their current media consumption, their previous media consumption during developmental years, and whether they are around other Native Americans

on a regular basis. Biological sex was not considered as a deciding criterion for participants to be able to share their story. If a participant chose to identify as female, I, as a researcher, treated them as females within my study.

Data Collection

Procedure

The research consisted of ten one-hour-long interviews in an attempt to reach redundancy through repeated similar findings throughout multiple participants (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The in-depth interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol. Participants were better able to display the various parts of their identities and, in turn, were better equipped to provide more insight into their self-perception. I chose in-depth respondent interviews with narrative elements for this study as my interviews were intended to elicit open-ended responses and encourage participants to describe and interpret experiences through lived experiences. The in-depth interviews had narrative elements as it was likely that participants would illustrate their lived experiences through stories. In-depth interviews provided the most data as, through these, I as the researcher was able to work alongside the participant to create rich insight into the experiences faced by Native American woman as I listened to their statements and stories, encouraging them as they elaborated and discussed their lives (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Throughout the interviews, I was able to search for and probe into specific experiences to better gain insight into my research questions.

Participants participated in interviews via the video-conferencing tool Zoom. Zoom interviews also increased sample diversity as geographic location was not a barrier for my participants. It also allowed for the audio to be recorded for transcription analysis.

Interview Protocol

The interviews discussed generalized topics such as self-perceived traits of participants, participants' usage of and opinions in relation to media, and attitudes and opinions in relation to participants' Native American heritage. Specifically, I used an interview guide, related to semi-structured interviews, which allowed more flexibility of question wording and order to adjust to the flow of the specific interview (Tracy, 2010), to improve conversation flow and help make the conversation more natural. Semi-structured interviews also prompted more self-disclosure by participants.

Within the first section discussing participants' self-description, participants described how they see themselves as well as their perception of their community and peers both independently of themselves and in relation to themselves. The first section also discussed self-representation through social media and in-person social interactions alike. Feelings of shame and pride that a participant had about themselves were viewed as formative elements of their identity perception and formation. The second section discussed topics such as media and assessed what media platforms the participants typically used as well as the typical media that they consumed or consumed in the past. This portion also explored participants' perceptions of popular characters within their favorite television shows and movies, providing insight into participants' ideas about character happiness and comparing their own traits with those of characters they admire. In the third and final section of the interview protocol, participants were invited to discuss their heritage and how it related to who they are. Participants described their family history and the Native connections they have both to their heritage and to their historic Native lands. Participants compared their Native American female friendships to their non-Native female friendships. They discussed how their friendships were affected by their

culture and familial history. Additionally, participants related how being Native—specifically a Native American woman—has impacted them throughout their lives. They were encouraged to reflect upon how they feel their lives might have been different if they were not of Native race and culture.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were analyzed using thematic analysis to better understand the themes that best explained the perspectives expressed by Native American women as they told their stories. The interviews were guided by my research foci: Native American women’s self-perception as it relates to mass media portrayals; how Native American women negotiate their cultural identities and self-perception both within their in-group culture and their out-group culture; and how a Native American women’s negotiation of self-perception change when discussing group membership.

Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to capture important aspects of collected data specifically in relation to the research questions, essentially taking out the extra *fluff* that can take away from the true meaning and findings of the research. In accordance with Braun and Clarke’s six steps of thematic analysis, I began my research by familiarizing myself with the data. First, I transcribed the interviews using otter.ai and then verified them for correctness. I did this by listening to the audio while reading the interview transcriptions, editing them as needed. To look closely at the data, I reread the data and formed initial ideas about it. Next, I created initial codes based upon my observation of the entire data set; all data (words, phrases, sentences) related to specific codes were placed into groups. I further organized these groups of codes into potential themes so that, ultimately, I placed all data

relevant to each potential theme into their correct section. If data were determined to be irrelevant to any of the selected themes, I classified them as miscellaneous. The fourth step, according to Braun and Clarke, is to review the selected themes and ensure that they work in relation to the coded data and in relation to all the data as a whole. Thus, I analyzed data and placed them into the corresponding themes. After I selected and refined parameters of each theme, I created clear definitions and precise naming for each theme. Finally, data were selected to elaborate on the most vivid and representative examples that related to previous literature and research areas (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I informed my understanding of the themes with specific concepts from previous theories. From social identity theory, thematic categories related to the sense of belonging and social competition followed the approach outlined by Trepte and Loy (2017). These categories helped to explain Native American women's feelings toward their peers, both Native American women and those of other races. The theme of in-group versus out-group provided insight to the way that Native American women interacted with the groups they are members of and their perceived relationship within their tribal community. This theme may show if being a member of their tribal community affected Native American women (Kopacz & Lee Lawton, 2011). The theme of "in-group vs. out-group" gave insight into how Native American women might think about their social value. This helped determine Native American Woman's perceived social worth and how it may have impacted not only their self-esteem but their self-perception (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Although my categories were predominantly derived from the previous literature discussed, I also allowed for other ideas to present themselves throughout my research and the theme of spirituality/nature, something that many participants stated their heritage makes them feel connected or drawn to.

Themes derived from self-categorization theory included personality/individualism, group cohesion/group polarization, power, and duality. As self-categorization theory suggests that someone can have both social and personal identities (Turner, 1999), the theme of personality/individualism was used to identify when it appeared that a Native American woman was discussing her more personal beliefs despite her group memberships. As for group cohesion/group polarization (in-group vs. out-group), this theme explored when a Native American woman felt as though she was part of the overall group (in-group), or when she felt as if she was a member of the outgroup. As expected, most Native American women felt like members of the outgroup when discussing things such as popular media. Finally, the theme of power displayed what Native American women felt they had control over and what they did not. This theme assessed the ways that Native American women felt when they were accepted within a group or rejected (Turner, 1999). The concept of duality provides details in terms of how Native American women discussed their Native heritage and identity in conjunction with their identity, as well as how it may have affected her relationships and group memberships alike.

Themes informed by standpoint theory (Harding, 2020) were used to analyze the notions of race, culture, and social class (Harding, 2020). The theme of race highlighted the the women experienced specifically by being a Native American woman. This theme analyzed how Native American women felt about their race and how that may affect their self-esteem and self-perception. The participants discussed the experience and impact of being a White-passing Native Woman. The theme of culture seems a bit obvious within this study, but it gave insight into Native American women's social identities and how they viewed their value in relation to group membership. Finally, the theme of social class uncovered what it was like for Native

American women in terms social class and wealth. As research shows that Native Americans tend to have a lower economic status, this theme showed how there may be a connection between self-worth and self-perception. Standpoint theory gave insight into how Native American Women view the world and act in social situations as a result of their unique life experiences and personal traits.

All themes provided more context to the experience of being a Native American woman and her self-perception and self-esteem because of mainstream media consumption and usage. The Native American women's comments provided insight was gained into experiences that shape Native American Women's identities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how I conducted the research that addresses the objectives of this study, how I utilized standpoint theory, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory, discussed in the literature review, to inform our understanding of what it is like to be a Native American woman. I have also discussed how I collected data as well as who my participants were. By identifying my ideal participants prior to conducting my study, I was better equipped to find participants who fit what I was looking for, which will make my study findings stronger and more representative of the Native American Female experience. An understanding and application of applicable theories and the creation of themes provided in-depth insights of the experiences of Native American women.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Responses from the ten in-depth interviews of Native American women were placed into the themes for this study based on standpoint theory, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory. Participants in this study were Native women of eight different Tribal nations—the Klamath, Patawomeck, Dakota Cherokee, Nottoway, Upper Mattaponi, Osage, Choctaw, and Sac & Fox--and were between the ages of 19 and 67. All participants acknowledged their Native heritage in one way or another and were at least moderately active within their tribal communities, some extremely active, participating in multiple committees and working toward bringing awareness of racism to Native Americans specifically as well as preserving their heritage. In this chapter, I will detail the women's perceptions of their identity in relation to media representation and in terms of various theories related to identity.

Native Women, the Media, and Identity

Overall, when asked about their feelings and opinions toward media, participants oftentimes did not discuss how media affected their self-perception, specifically as Native women, but they did have opinions on media in general, whether it was positive, negative, or neutral. Although much focus of the review of literature was on the impact that media has on Native American women's self-perception and self-esteem, many participants only provided general answers when asked about media. After being asked which characters they related to on their favorite television shows both currently and throughout their childhood, participants responded by saying none. They then often went on to attribute this to the fantasy that the television and social media world provides. When asked about her feelings towards media, Iris said,

I'm a millennial. I'm a first-year millennial. Oh, geez. I love media, right? I grew up without it, and then I had it. And so I'm a big fan. I think it's horrible for me, but I'm a big fan. I can't stop it, like with TikTok. I have given TikTok hours I can't get back.

Quinn's view of media was much starker than that of Iris. She decided to discuss media in terms of education and trust rather than the entertainment perspective that Iris had. Quinn said, "I feel like you have to be really careful with media and not believe everything you see or read. I think that my general opinion is that everything could be a farce. So take it with a grain of salt." Jenna had a very similar take on media to that of Quinn. When I asked Jenna how she felt about media, she said:

I started in broadcast journalism, and that's where I started right. Um, in that era, this is a very long time ago, this is pre-Reagan. In that era, the media was considered to be the watchdog of society. It was investigative journalism and required three corroborating sources. It required evidence. You had to have documented evidence. This is pre-internet. So investigative journalism was a very different world. Political journalism was a very different world because you had to give equal time to the opposing opinion of whatever it was that you were putting on. And it wasn't just ads. It was debated, it was town halls, it was all kinds of you had to give equal time to the opposing view. And Reagan deregulated all of that. And then we have the birth of CNN. CNN tried for about seven, eight years to keep it objective. But the pace of constant 24/7 News, when you used to be able to sift through and find evidence and go track something down. Now, if there is a called-in tip, you put it on, you broadcasted it because it was doing news, and you needed to fill airtime. Then you have the advent of Fox News, Ted Turner comes on, and he says I can make money off of giving people news specific to their taste. And this increases the polarization between different media outlets.

One of the key positive aspects identified by participants in terms of media was the capability of social media to allow them to stay connected to those who may be geographically far away. Sasha noted how, because of social media specifically, she was better able to stay in touch with her Native friends back on her reservation while she was away at college several states away. Sasha even mentioned that she had met some of her Indigenous friends via social media. When discussing this, Sasha said, "I have a lot of indigenous friends through either social media or just like from my reservation because we would go when I was a kid."

In terms of Native Americans and media, many participants had a hard time remembering the last time that they saw a Native American represented in media, or they mentioned western-themed shows and movies. After touching on how she feels that often Native Americans are left out of conversations that discuss minorities, she went on to state how at her most recent academic conference, those of Native descent had decided to meet up, and that was the first time she had seen Native Americans be represented at a conference, let alone within the media. Patricia said, "I just feel like media, in general, doesn't really show a whole lot of Native American people."

Some participants also touched on the fact that they tended to prefer different characters than their friends or consistently liked the minority character on a show more than that of their White counterparts. Although some participants preferred the minority group characters, it's notable that none of them specifically said that they related with their character just because they were a minority group member, often shaking it off as an odd coincidence unrelated to their Native heritage. Quinn discussed her childhood Character preferences by stating:

My favorite character would be the one that wasn't white. Like, I liked the Yellow Ranger, who was Asian American. And there were a couple of shows like that were like the one that was like the oddball because everybody was white.

Overall, besides identifying that there was a lack of Native Americans in popular media, participants did not discuss how they felt media affected them beyond its capabilities. Participants viewed media both as a tool and as something that could be harmful to those who consume it. For many, media is how we get our information and stay up to date as to what's happening in the world around us.

Theorizing Native Women's Identity

Standpoint Theory

An analysis of participant responses provided insight on the topics of race, culture, and social class. Many participants acknowledge their Native race, but, in addition to their indigenous roots, the majority also mentioned their White-passing appearance. Culture was described much the same way for many participants. They grew up with a combination of White and Native culture. They also participated much in White culture in terms of dress, food, holidays, and the traditional Anglo-Saxon religion of Christianity when they were in their formative years. It's important to note that many women now have chosen to disassociate from the church and instead have chosen a more spirituality-driven type of worship that they feel better aligns with their personal beliefs and echoes their Native heritage. In terms of social class, the results differed. Some participants were raised in what could be considered upper-middle-class homes, and now, as adults, they are financially stable, partly because of their tribe's mineral rights. Other women grew up much less financially stable, often having to make things work in terms of hand-me-down clothes and school lunches even when they weren't the biggest fans of them. It also wasn't uncommon for participants to reference the poverty that their parents and grandparents faced. This acknowledgement of generational poverty and oftentimes upward mobility was done through acknowledging how, although they were not rich, they had believed that they were far better off than their family members were 50 to 100 years ago.

Race

The theme of race not only gave insight into how Native American women describe their racial background but also allowed women to share the confusion that comes with having a

biracial or multiracial heritage, often appearing as one single race. Patricia, a university Instructor at a Historically Black university, often must explain to her mostly Black students why she has chosen to instruct at their university, and not one that has mostly White students. This has led her to begin to introduce herself as a Native American woman when she first begins class on the first day of the semester. She explained that after she introduces herself this way, her students don't typically question why she has chosen to teach at an HBCU. However, she discussed how, if she were to instruct at a traditional White-dominant University, it is much more likely that she would have to explain her heritage as many would just see her as White. After discussing why she chose to instruct at an HBCU, she chatted about what race meant to her, as someone who is not only biracial but also studies race relations. At one point, she simply stated, "Challenging race is very hard as race takes place in this binary setting."

By describing race as binary, Patricia gave an insight into her often-internal push and pull between being a White-passing individual living in a White, dominant world while also knowing about her Native heritage and acknowledging that through her Native American community. It was clear that Patricia viewed race as something that was not a Black-and-White dichotomy. We then began discussing what it means to be a White-passing individual who knows that they're not fully White. Patricia describes how she chooses to acknowledge her Native race but is never too open about it to those whom she does not know well. Her reluctance can likely be attributed to the secrecy that her father placed around her and her siblings being Native. By selectively choosing who she discloses her racial identity to, Patricia is more willing to share her identity when it is necessary, such as when she feels that it would give context into who she is. On the contrary, she does not disclose it when she does not seek said context, creating a two-way pattern of not hiding her race while also not fully disclosing it and then going on to share it.

I don't think I ever try to fully present myself as White. I think my students understand where I come from because I introduced myself that way. So, I would say I make it very visible right away, you know, who I am and where I come from. But aside from that, I don't really say anything more about it unless somebody asks a question. I would say in the community as well when I'm out in public--I live in the Auburn area, which is a college town--there's some diversity, but it's also rural Alabama. It's a lot of White students at Auburn. I wouldn't necessarily disclose that if I were to teach at Auburn, I wouldn't be in a classroom and say or have to feel like I have to justify my race in front of my students. If I worked at Auburn, I would introduce myself like, "Hi, I'm Dr. Patricia, and you could call me Patricia. I come from the Lakota Cherokee tribe out of Alabama." I would not present myself in that way like I do to my HBCU students. Now that I think about it, why do I have to justify this? But there's a part of me that feels like I have to in order to obtain comfortability with me and understanding that I have this sort of displacement in some way.

Mary stated that when she was a child, she was not allowed to discuss her Native racial background due to her parents many warnings of what may happen if she did, including the threat of being discriminated against because of her race. She feared getting her family into a lot of social trouble as well as her parents into possible legal trouble because the parents were the first of each of their families to be labeled as White on their birth certificate. As her parents were legally White, they listed White on their own children's documents, including Mary's. Due to the legal identification, Mary identified as White for most of her life, but, within the last two decades, she has just begun reclaiming her Native American heritage and embracing her biracial background rather than fearing it. When asked about why she chose to hide her race much longer than was legally necessary, she stated, "I was so scared that being open about my race would come back to hurt me. My parents always stated that we needed to be secretive about it for our own safety, and if we were not, our lives would change drastically, and I didn't want that."

Racial identity also became more complicated when indigenous peoples almost passed as White, but not quite, many people began accusing Native Americans of being Colored or Black. Carla, who is the daughter of a full-blooded Upper Mattaponi Native father and a White mother,

elaborated on this experience by discussing the confusion that came with it as well as how, when she described her heritage, it was much different than how her peers and friends did so.

It definitely made me question who I was and some of my decisions. It impacted some of my confidence with certain things. I would hear, “You're too dark to really be White, and you're too light to really be Native.” I would question, well, what do I do? Do I just ignore it? For a long time? I just ignored the Native part of it. I really didn't talk about it that much.

This choice to ignore her Native background racially and culturally caused Carla a lot of confusion. Although Carla often spent time visiting her fully Native grandparents, she chose to ignore her racial identity out of convenience. By feeling as if she wasn't enough of either one – White or Native -- and hearing it from others, Carla made a choice to only acknowledge the more accepted racial background, which was White. Sasha spoke about other ways her physical appearance showed her Nativeness outwardly. She spoke about how hard it was to have predominant features such as high cheekbones and a larger-than-average nose when compared to her White peers. She often wanted more subtle features, and she even tried to do her makeup in the same way that other people would, often becoming frustrated when it did not look the same way on her as it did others. In discussing this, she shared:

I really did like my features for a very long time throughout like high school, I was like. I don't look like you. I don't feel like I look like you. I remember I felt like I was an ugly White girl. I would just sit there and think, I don't have the super small nose. I was always contouring my nose. I also wanted to have my cheekbones redacted because I felt like it took up too much of my face. I felt that they were so big, they're too big. There was always just this emphasis of, I'm not White enough, but my skin's White. But I'm also not Native enough. And then everyone's discrediting when I try to talk about my experience.

Culture

Culture affects how many see the world around them, as well as how they act. Since many Native American women are multicultural, some families or communities preserve certain aspects of each culture they're a part of and blend the two to create their own unique third

culture, one that rests somewhere between the two mainstream cultures. By encouraging Native American women to discuss their culture as well as their traditions within their families and communities', insight was gained into what the Native American female experience is like, as well as how it may affect Native American women in terms of their self-perception.

For some Native American Women, culture changes as they age. This change is often the case for women who do not know or are not connected with their Native American heritage prior to adulthood. In this case, it is most likely that the woman will fully accept her mainstream or White background as her only background, fully embracing it and acting in accordance with the social norms in place. Carla, who was not involved with her tribal community until her middle-aged years, expressed what her culture was like when she was a child: "Although I'm Native American, I had a whole lot of White and Caucasian influence in my life, so I wasn't really versed on a lot of Native American traditions or my heritage and culture."

An interesting aspect of Carla's lack of knowledge around Native history and tradition was that her father was a full-blooded Native American man, and Carla was aware of this throughout her childhood. Her parents never chose to partake in any cultural events in terms of Carla's father's Native heritage. Instead, they partook in her White mother's traditions. The choice to ignore Native traditions could be due to multiple things, including but not limited to the commonality that White culture had at the time of Carla's formative years, her father's poor experiences being raised as a Native American, or the decision that having one culture was much easier to explain to others than it was to explain how the family had multiple cultures.

For other Native women, a blended culture seems normal as it was all they knew. Iris gave insight into how, even in knowing dominant culture from the very beginning of one's life, often when one lives in White, dominant culture, one adopts many White cultural elements. Even

though Iris grew up traveling back to her home reservation with her grandparents every summer until she was in her late teens, she participated in many White, American teen norms such as attending public school, watching mainstream television, and celebrating White, mainstream holidays. However, she also discussed many culturally Native things, like how many stories were shared orally by her grandparents. Many of them sounded like legend or lore, but all had the common thread of distrust of those outside of their tribal community. When asked about how she identified with her Native culture, Iris told a short narrative about how she slowly discovered it:

The second I was born, I was put on the roll. I was tracked, which, I wasn't told I was being tracked for some time, but that never made me feel good. I mean, I have a lot of animosity towards the American government for tracking us and knowing exactly where we are because we're all divided into these allotments or head rights. So, on the back of my American government card is my allotment number that I'm under. That was given to me when I was born. My grandparents always did a really nice job of taking me back to the reservation and being involved in telling me the stories, these crazy stories, that money was buried on the property, obviously, the murders. Ever since I was a kid, we were always very open, but there was also a great mistrust towards people from the outside. I grew up on the outside, but my grandfather definitely did not trust the people on the outside, the ones that came in that weren't part of the community. It made me hold my Native culture closer and maybe not be so open about it.

Sasha, a current university student, had a similar experience when it came to being connected with her tribe often, she would go visit her grandmother in the summers on her tribal land; however, she herself has never fully lived there, having grown up in a White-dominant suburb of Chicago. Since her grandmother's death, her family has not taken the time to visit the reservation as often as they had previously, and, as a result, she has not seen some of her friends in person for the last few years.

I have a lot of indigenous friends through either social media or just from my reservation because we would go like when I was a kid about once a summer because my grandma lived down there. We would always go and visit, but after she passed away, we haven't really gone in a while since then.

Much like Carla and unlike Iris and Sasha, Kathy did not grow up acknowledging her Native culture or heritage. Her mother had remarried her stepfather, who then adopted her, and, from there on, they were a very typical, White, Christian family. Kathy's parents limited her and her sister's television time and phone time along with choosing not to discuss her Native heritage. However, Kathy's grandmother always spoke about their Native heritage as well as her own family. Kathy's grandmother mentioned two things that really stuck with her throughout her life and even led to Kathy authoring and publishing a book about her grandmother and their family story. In these stories, Kathy's grandmother would describe a curse that she believed that gypsies left on Kathy's family because of them refusing to trade with them when they traveled through their area. In addition to this, Kathy's grandmother often spoke about how the community that she was raised in rallied around her family even when crisis struck, including a house and both of Kathy's great grandparents being struck by lightning – only her great-grandfather surviving. The community that Kathy's grandmother was referring to in the stories is called White Oak, and it's a section of Stafford County, Virginia, in which many members of the Patawomeck tribe reside. Although it cannot be confirmed that every person who helped Kathy's family was of Native descent, it is likely that many of them would be if genealogical records were analyzed. Many descendants of these helpful community members are now tribal members themselves. After sharing this, Kathy shared her view on a community that her grandmother described as well as the way that she views the community of White Oak now:

What I learned from my grandma is that everybody there was kind to one another and helped one another, and believed in it. They didn't do it because they thought it was a charity case or anything like that. I feel like people are very much involved with the land and nature. They're more like a natural-living lifestyle type of people, instead of artificial. And I feel like they're a very determined group of people. I feel like they like what, what is it going to take? This is what it takes.

Although Kathy's story is not directly about her Native heritage, it is simply the only clue that she has beyond recorded texts and documents of what her Native background really means in terms of her family and lineage. Much like Iris' family, she also discussed how her family and the overall community at the time of her grandmother's childhood did not trust outsiders, leading to a lack of trade with them and because of a so-called curse.

Spirituality and Nature

Spirituality and connectedness to Nature were also a key aspect that many Native women spoke about. Rather than being religious, many Native women spoke about feeling more connected to nature and being more spiritual, or about feeling both spiritually connected to nature and religious. All participants stated that when they decided to embrace their Native American culture, many of their actions made much more sense. For instance, Beth discussed feeling connected with nature and often animals throughout her life. She gave insight into how validating it was to realize how her Native history could be contributing to her love of the outdoors and the calmness she felt when she was able to be outside. "Knowing my Native culture has helped me feel more grounded and a little more spiritual, as well as connected with nature." Along with her belief in many spiritual things, such as an afterlife, Kathy discussed her feelings towards her Native culture in the same way that Beth did. She mentioned often going out and digging to find garnets simply for enjoyment and the feelings of peace and relaxation that it gave her. In addition to her passion for the outdoors, she discussed how, once she discovered her Native heritage, her concerns with the earth's health and interesting ability made much more sense. Kathy then told a story about living off of buffalos like many Native Americans did for hundreds of years but also understanding, there is a fine line between taking enough to survive and taking too much.

I appreciate going outside. There's a creek that is in Mineral, Virginia, that I like to go to. It's really ridiculous. We go park under a bridge, and there's this place in the creek where you can dig up garnets. I just like to go get down in the creek in the mud, dig up garnets. I feel much more connected to the earth. I think a lot of Native American people are. I also go mushroom hunting; we go out and pick chanterelles when they're in season. I feel like understanding that I am Native American has helped me connect more to that nature-loving side of myself and want to protect the Earth. I see a lot of things go wrong with our earth that are really upsetting to me.

Patricia discussed how her Native heritage has led her to become more spiritual rather than her traditional Catholic background. She also cited how frustrating it is when others attempt to impose their religion on her, acting as if spirituality isn't enough even though many of her Native American ancestors practiced it for hundreds of years. Elaborating on her spirituality, Patricia discussed that the reason she identifies so strongly with it is because she feels connected to the earth and agrees with the concepts of mindfulness and being present. She said that she doesn't situate herself with a particular religion and attributed the confusion and backlash that she receives to the fact that she lives in Alabama, a state in which many people are members of a Christian faith: "I don't situate myself within a particular religion. I identify with the Native American spirituality and, more like earth, the things that surround our cultural heritage, which is understanding of the things around you and mindfulness and presence."

Spirituality and connectedness to nature were things that many Native women mentioned and things by which they define themselves after reflecting upon their Native heritage a bit. Quinn, a member of the Patawomeck tribe in Virginia, also spoke about spirituality and a feeling of connectedness to nature and animals. She identified this across her family, not only in herself, which gave her another tie to family members, both in close relatives and ancestors. "I am always more aware of nature and animals and plant life. I pay more attention to things like that, and some other people do, and it really drives my sense of community and family."

Alice, a member of the Klamath tribe and an Oregon Native, elaborated on how her spirituality defined so much more than her connectedness with nature. She discussed how different her life would be if she did not feel these connections, including how her choices would be greatly affected as well.

My spirituality really directs the way that I live my life. And if I didn't have that, if I didn't have my connection to the land, and to my people—even just believing that everything has a spirit and a life, from a rock to a tree—if I didn't have those deeply held beliefs, I would run my life in a different way, would treat myself differently. I would treat other people differently. My work is service-oriented to my people; I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't be as kind to myself and the earth. I think my life would be absolutely different.

Although spirituality/nature was an emergent theme, it is evident that Native women feel a great pull to the earth, and that pull affects many aspects of themselves. Spirituality and a connectedness to Nature may allow Native women to feel connected to something when they often do not feel that way to other groups around them.

Social Class

Social class was more of a taboo topic among participants than expected. Social class displayed how Native American women are treated by the dominant White Majority as subordinate due to their skin color or family financial success. As many Natives did not disclose their Native heritage, only one participant was raised on their reservation. Social class was alluded to by participants much more often than it was blatantly stated by them. Although the social class is not directly linked to financial stability, Patricia discussed how careful she and her siblings were in terms of alcohol consumption due to her father's warnings about the known stereotypes of Native Americans being alcoholics. She discussed her fear of being falsely labeled an alcoholic or becoming one by elaborating on how this affected her when she began drinking as well as now when she chooses to consume alcohol.

My dad told me years ago that a lot of Native Americans tend to be alcoholics. He told me and my two sisters from when we were little to be careful with alcohol because he lost his dad, my grandpa, to lung cancer and then also alcoholic cirrhosis. So that was something he said ran in the family, and just to be cognizant of that, because we are Native American. I'm always hesitant to present myself in that way because I always think that people affiliate Native Americans with having an alcohol or substance abuse problem. I'm very careful about that. My sisters and I were more aware of really paying attention to how much we were drinking. What we are drinking, how often we drink, and then making sure that people who know our background don't maybe see us drink as often and even going so far to say, I'm not really a drinker. As well as emphasizing that even to physicians.

Carla did not directly reference what troubles her Native family members went through; however, she did make it a point to discuss that her father's life as a full-blooded Native American in the Upper Mattaponi tribe was often very hard. She even attributed the reasons why he did not wish to be connected with his tribal heritage to these hardships. She stated:

My father had a really hard childhood, him and his siblings. So, when they got old enough and got out on their own, they were not involved in the Native community. They thought, "Okay, I'm out, I'm not turning back."

Kathy echoed this experience of hearing about the hardships that her family members faced yet never hearing too many details beyond the big events that likely caused them to reject their tribal ways due to hardships. Kathy's family, which was known to be unlucky, had many hardships, and she discussed them in a way that showed how the family had decided to keep quiet about them so as not to have to relive the pain that they experienced. She also discussed how, because of these tragic events faced by her family, many people viewed them as unlucky and even less financially and socially upstanding, often having to resort to help from community members when they fell upon hard times.

There is an actual *Free Lance-Star*, the old newspaper, about some of the events that happened in my family. I know how the family was viewed. And I also know this because we were labeled as downtrodden. That was the term that's actually used in the newspaper article that term because it was just like event after event after event of bad things happening to them.

Social Identity Theory

As social identity allows people to define their place in society, Native American women within the study had the opportunity to do just that. Participants reflected upon times when they felt as if they were not a part of a larger group or were less desirable due to their heritage. As Native American women reflected on these experiences, many chose to tell stories or explain things that commonly happened to them that they felt were triggering or upsetting.

In-group vs. Out-group

When asked to describe themselves, participants typically did not define themselves by their Nativeness, and if they did, this was not the first statement that they used to illustrate who they were. It appeared that participants described themselves by what was safe and non-controversial. Many women chose to cite their job, their academic area of study, or a defining characteristic that they had, such as their strength or their Nativeness. Some participants discussed how they felt if they mentioned their Nativeness during an introduction, they would be questioned on multiple things, including one thing mentioned by almost every participant, “What percent are you?”

Carla reflected on what it felt like to be questioned by the dominant, White majority on just how much of a member she was of the outgroup. She often had to disclose how Native she was just to appease them. She discussed these experiences by stating: “It's like that question of when you tell somebody you're Native, and they're like, oh, what percentage are you?”

Belonging and Social Competition

Native Americans specifically have an interesting challenge when it comes to expressing who they are to others, often being asked to *prove* their Nativeness. Traditionally, during times of social competition group members will become socially competitive with out-groups to

attempt to make their in-group positively distinctive (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). One participant who is employed by a historically Black college elaborated on how exactly she had been asked to prove her heritage “When my students would see me come in the classroom for the first time, the first questions that I would get, and I still get all the time, even though I'm in my third year, why are you here?” In explaining her in-group status as a minority group member, she made herself socially competitive with the out-group. The need to explain her reasonings for her choice in a university specifically added another element of curiosity in how Native Americans are supposed to prove their heritage. Other participants expressed that they were not even given the option to fully prove their Nativeness; instead, they were simply told that there was no way that they were Native “enough” to do certain things or claim that part of themselves. One participant described how her own non-Native family members expressed this to her when she began attempting to adopt a child from her tribal lands. Although she did not ever fully reside on the tribal lands, she returned to them each summer with her grandparents and therefore had deep ties to her home reservation. This not only resulted in her wanting to create a deeper tie to her reservation, but it also allowed a child a better life as a member of her family while also acknowledging the child's heritage--something that she did not always have. She described the experience to me in this way:

Even some of my own family members who are not on the Native side, they'll be like, “Oh, they're not going to give you a baby. You're not, you know, you're not Native enough.” And I'm like, “It's not like that. You're either a member, or you're not a member. You either have a bloodline, or you don't.”

Speaking on the same topic, another participant illustrated how many non-Natives think that Native American heritage should be “proven”: by blood quantum. She then discussed how this became a sort of weighing of how indigenous someone is in comparison to that of how much they are of any other culture or heritage, especially in comparison to that of the initial colonizing

countries of North America: As one participant stated, “There's this measuring how Indigenous you are.”

When it comes to blood quantum, specifically, Mary was knowledgeable about exactly how measuring Nativeness through blood quantum began in the state of Virginia and shared how her own generation and generations before her were forced to choose the ability to claim their heritage or the ability to have access to better opportunities. This lack of acknowledgment of their Native heritage by many was enabled by claiming they were not Native but instead White. This led to what she appropriately described as a “paper genocide of Native Americans in the state of Virginia”:

Well, the beginning. When the Virginia Department of Vital Statistics was created in 1912, the first Registrar, Dr. Walter Plecker, a eugenics movement supporter in the United States, began recording births according to race. The standard was set that if a person had one drop of blood other than White, their birth certificate was labeled colored. There were only two options, Colored and White. It became so serious that Doctors and Midwives were threatened to be punished if they labeled a birth certificate anything other than W or C.

The forced choice of heritage or fair treatment may have caused many Native American families not only to disregard their heritage but also to hide it, like Mary’s family did.

Self-Categorization Theory

Self-Categorization Theory worked well to guide the analysis of my participants' views in regard to the aspects that made up their personality and how they viewed these things in terms of their own social value and desirability. Self-categorization theory was important when attempting to determine why Native American women felt the way they did in terms of their own social equality. Aspects of self-categorization theory give insight into why Native American women see themselves in the way that they do, which in turn could affect their actions on a day-to-day basis.

Personality/individualism

Many Native women have begun to embrace their differences in contrast to the dominant White culture. An intersection is found among these women's cultures that has been created and blended because of White and Native cultural influences.

Carla revealed that she personally feels that she sees herself as stronger than many other women that she knows. When asked to describe who she is, her strength was the first thing that she stated, which showed that not only was her strength something that she was exceptionally proud of, but also something that she often defined herself by: "I think if I really retrospect on me and my life, I would say I am a woman who has overcome a lot of challenges and obstacles to get to where I am now." This strength is reflective of many Native American women's experiences and what they believe in, including Jenna's advocacy work often working against policies created by large governments and corporations. Even though Jenna could capitalize from many opportunities financially, she has chosen to remain strong in her decision to be motivated by change rather than income, no matter the cost. Although she did not actively discuss her strength in herself and her beliefs, it was apparent when she stated:

I am not going to come in and assemble a board for you and walk away; that's not going to be it because that is disrespectful for the indigenous people that I contact to partner with you. I'm not going to do it. But if you're willing to make the change, if you're honestly and earnestly willing to do the work, then perhaps we can do something meaningful together. But I am not interested in making money off of ticked boxes.

In contrast to describing themselves through their beliefs or what they believe about themselves, other participants described themselves in more concrete and general terms. Patricia did so when she shared what made her herself:

I am married. And I am 34 years old. And I am originally from Michigan and moved to Florida and lived there for the majority of my life after I turned 18. And then, I moved to Alabama, and I worked as a professor. I'm a doctor in communication studies, with an emphasis on health and interpersonal communication.

When asked why she chose the terms that she did, Patricia acknowledged the reason we were talking was because she was a Native American woman, and she was eligible to participate in my study. She did this by simply following up on her descriptive answer by stating: “Yeah, they're unrelated to anything that has to do with race.” Iris had a very similar approach when she gave a laundry list, which was effective not only to show who she was but also to establish that she was a qualified professional:

I am an associate professor at a university and Chair of the IRB there. Now, I'm not sure if that's positive or negative. I am the director of the terror management lab. It's interdisciplinary. So, my appointment is actually in the School of Communication Studies. But I sometimes teach in the Department of Psychology. I have a graduate student in the Department of Graduate Psychology, some kind of split in between a lot of places. But the people that pay my bills are the communication department. I am from Overland Park, Kansas. I grew up outside Kansas City. But I was born in Wichita, Kansas, and then my family grew up on my Indian Reservation in Oklahoma, which is the Osage Tribe. I spent a fair amount of summers out there. I don't know if you want to know my research area. I study death.

Iris' identity wed her culture to her personal choices, including her area of academic study. To her, her culture and heritage are just as much a part of who she is. Through the individual area that she studies, as well as the research content that she works to improve, Iris gains knowledge and provides insight into ethical research methods. Her particular research area, as well as the way that she discussed it, gave the impression that Iris somehow associated her tribal heritage with where she is in life currently and the path that she chose to take, despite her not stating this directly.

Some Native American women that participated in my study viewed their Native heritage as something that they had to defend or define themselves by. When Beth was asked who she was, she explained that she's recently discovered her tribal heritage and elaborated a little bit on her journey of learning who she is after being raised White. After hearing rumors that she was of

Native descent, more specifically Cherokee, she took to the Internet to attempt to figure out exactly what tribal relation she was or whether her family lore was even true. Although it was hard to find proof of her heritage, Beth found out she was Chereonhaka-Nottoway, a state-recognized tribe in Virginia. Although she could never fully authenticate her family legend that she was a descendant of the Cherokee tribe, she found a community in her Chereonhaka-Nottoway even though she is states away in Florida. She keeps in touch mainly via Facebook and managed to connect with family members she did not know she had, including multiple second and third cousins. When discussing why she searched to better understand her Native heritage, she said she felt more connected to nature and to her childhood home along the Virginia and North Carolina border. Being Native made her feel as though she was a part of something special, along with feeling more grounded overall.

It makes me feel more grounded. It explains why I've always leaned more towards spirituality and connectedness with nature. I was able to explain a lot of things about myself when learning about my Native culture, and now I'm able to teach others about it, too, Native or not. I also used to feel just regular; now, I feel a bit more special with the history that I know.

Beth illustrates how being Native can mean so much more than just the frustrations that come along with it. To Beth, and possibly many other Native American women, knowing their heritage has allowed them to understand a part of their story that, for many Native people, has been erased and replaced with a Whitewashed version of the events that truly happened. This whitewashing of history led Beth to feel as if she didn't truly know every part of herself, which, in turn, led her to question who she was.

Group cohesion/group polarization

Asking my participants to describe themselves also provided insight into how they chose to categorize themselves. By having them describe who they were, they were able to share what

groups they saw themselves as a part of, including familial groups, tribal communities, occupational groups, and academic disciplines, among other things. As self-categorization theory places emphasis on what groups a person considers themselves a part of and which they don't, participants shared about what groups where they felt comfortable. They were also able to discuss groups in which they felt uncomfortable.

In her professional life, Patricia stated that she often felt closer to a fellow Native White passing woman than she did her other minority group co-workers. Patricia went so far as to state that she was more bonded to this person, citing age as well as race. She also chose to identify herself as White in this moment rather than Native American, as she did for much of the interview. She described her relationship with another individual who was close to her age; however, that individual is Black. Patricia described how it's not her co-worker's racial backgrounds that she believed makes her feel close to them. It is, in fact, the way that they act in terms of culture. As both Patricia and the other person act very much in accordance with White culture, Patricia, someone raised in White culture, feels as though she is more easily a part of their group due to social norms. Patricia provided more details on this relationship by saying:

I do work with a couple of White professors. The person who I find myself most bonded to is a White woman because she is a younger faculty member who is closer in age with me. So that makes sense that we would kind of connect in that way, but she's also White. And so having that, I don't know, I feel a sense of trustworthiness with her. But I'll also say, one of the other interesting things that I found, I'm very close with a colleague of mine who 's a Black woman, but she and I just went to a conference together and we roomed together, and she presents herself in a White way. I think that that's also an interesting dynamic too. I would say that we like to think about diversity, but sometimes we find ourselves just naturally connected to people who are similar to us in our background.

Although she chose to present herself as White when it came to often associating with co-workers and acquaintances, Patricia also provided a great example of how White-passing Native American women navigate the world. Native American White-passing women often switch

between identifying as White or Native depending upon the situation and may even do so based upon their yearning for group acceptance, which may change throughout the Woman's life, career, or day. Patricia illustrated how quickly she could change. For example, during our interview, she spoke of her identification as White when it came to her relationships with her co-workers, but when it came to her neighbors she stated that she did not feel the same as them in terms of race despite the fact that visually both she and her neighbors could be considered White. When asked if she has ever chosen to identify solely as White for any reason including convince or comfortability, she replied:

I don't think I ever try to fully present myself as White. My students understand where I come from because I introduced myself that way. I would say I make it very visible right away who I am and where I come from. But aside from that, I don't really say anything more about it unless somebody asks a question.

Iris discussed her frustration that even in efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion among minority group members, Native Americans are often forgotten. She mentioned the lack of Native peoples on D.E.I advertisements as well a lack of Native American voices. Iris described how her experience was much different from that of a typical minority group employee. This lack of Native American representation reflected Iris' observation that indigenous groups are not a part of the targeted diversity groups that her university seeks to promote and improve relations with. She notes that there has been one recent mention of the university's grounds being on ancestral land by two students. The university has since shared the information but requalified this by elaborating on how this is the first mention of Native heritage that the university has chosen to make. This relates especially in comparison to the thousands of statements that the university has made about other racial and cultural minority groups.

As with most universities, we're really interested in D.E.I., but of all of the BIPOC faculty and students, Indigenous folks are not part of that targeted group. So, it's super-interesting to watch. Two Indigenous students that we have at our university did a

photoshoot for something the other day and posted it, and that is literally the only thing that has been shared in terms of Indigenous community members besides having statements about the fact that we're on ancestral land. From my perspective, if you don't see it, then it doesn't count.

In this situation, Iris almost did not have control of whether a minority group was or was not represented or supported by her university community. She is often forced to be seen as White by many of her fellow community members as Native Americans do not have visibility on campus. It is unlikely that many will even consider her heritage being anything other than White, the racial majority at her institution.

Alice, a woman who was raised between her tribal Klamath reservation and White communities across the west coast, noted a night-and-day difference in feeling between herself and her colleagues in her doctoral program. Alice also discussed how she felt when it came to being romantically involved with non-Natives.

I'm all about a deeper connection and understanding, and I remember I went on a date with a White guy three years ago, and it was Mars and Venus, totally separate. Just like my colleagues here, totally living on different planets. I got a partner who is a Klamath Tribal member, and our shared experiences are amazing. My best friend is a Klamath Tribal member, and in academia, we just click so easy.

Duality

Patricia, a White-passing participant, discussed how she did not always disclose her Native heritage when she was in a group composed of White members. Patricia discussed how she didn't have many friends to talk about her heritage; however, she did discuss how she would likely react if she did:

If I were to make a friend around here, it would have to be very selective choice for me at this point because I don't know how trustworthy [sic] I am of the people here as I was when I was in Tampa, because it's just not as liberal. And I feel like a lot of the things that I believe don't align with the majority of people who live in the area.

This lack of trust is reminiscent of the lack of trust many Natives felt towards White Americans since colonialism began. When discussing the history of Virginia's colorist birth certificates allowing only two options, "White," or W, and "Colored," or C, Mary stated: "And this is what caused my Virginia family to not talk about their Native heritage."

As discussed above, Natives were forced to erase or ignore part of their history to be treated as full citizens. Iris shared that she would mention her culture if she was asked. However, she qualified that by discussing that recently a film had been made about her tribe, and she did not love how people began to prod her asking questions about her heritage afterward:

If someone asks me, I say I'm indigenous as a member of the Dakota-Cherokee, and everyone is interestingly starting to know about our nation because we had a movie made, and then a celebrity just did a thing on our group, which is really uncomfortable, I think, for all of us that we are very private. We don't want a ton of people knowing about us, we want people knowing about the history and all the horrible things that happened with the murders and stuff. But we don't need people knowing that we have all these mineral rights and things like that.

Here Iris' distrust in the White community is reflective of what other participants stated, that they're private about who they are, although the desire and sometimes even need for privacy among Native Americans has forced them to be a part of fewer groups than their White counterparts may have been a part of.

Jenna was a bit more outright about her heritage. However, that may be because she works in a space in which sensitivity to diversity is essential. Jenna does rhetorical policy analysis to identify toxic power structures, also referred to as colonized structures, in policies of corporations, governments, school districts, and anyone else who seeks her assistance. When she was asked if she is open about her heritage, she was blunt and direct: "I'm very straightforward with people. I tell them, I'm Chickasaw and Choctaw by birth by blood."

Jenna treated our conversation much less like a question-and-answer session and more like a conversation. This allowed for the conversation itself to feel much more comfortable and less tense. One thing that stood out to me about Jenna was when she discussed the dynamics that she had with her university-level students. She said: “My students used to call me Mamma Bear.”

Jenna’s tone and attitude throughout the interview alluded to a feeling of trust among students and teacher, a sort of relationship that was not seen between my other participants. Jenna unapologetically claimed her Nativeness. This is not to say that other participants didn’t, but Jenna appeared to be less cautious in terms of how she approached discussing her Native heritage. Jenna’s candidness may be one of the reasons why she was able to build trust with her students and other non-Native peoples in a way that some participants did not appear to be able to do. In addition to this, as identifying as a strong yet often gentle and harmless bear, Jenna showed a part of her Nativeness through her connection with nature and animals. She displayed a commonly held belief that Native American women are exceptionally strong and acknowledged how, despite this, Native American women are also often treated unfairly and put down for their Native heritage.

Power

In addition to how participants decided to describe their Native heritage to those outside of their Native community, they also tended to feel as though they needed to prove their worth. Moreover, participants appeared to make sure that other group members knew that they deserved to be there, whether it be in terms of status, professionalism, or knowledge. This acknowledgement that they were worthy of being a part of the space that they are in was done through establishing their power in scenarios, by reiterating qualifications, and by fighting when

they believed they were treated unfairly. When discussing the team of fellow researchers and instructors that she works with daily, Iris stated:

At my university, there are people in the psychology department that do not buy that I am a psychologist. And I constantly feel like I have to add things in there. Like no, I actually do know what I'm doing.

This showed not only that people had treated Iris as if she was not a truly educated researcher, but they had done so multiple times. Iris was underestimated as a researcher so much that she felt the need to justify her competence in the workplace. Iris discussed how she is often treated differently and unfairly in comparison to that of her fellow researchers. She shared a current experience that related to a generational trauma that many Native Americans in the U.S. have:

I've been doing a lot of work recently on a project with a graduate student, and now, just as we are wrapping up, it's been established that I'm no longer going to be working on it. As this project is essentially completed beyond a few small things, I will receive no credit while the new person who is assigned to it will. I did all of the work while a White man is getting all the credit. When it happened, I thought back to my ancestors, who had their money had to be managed by White people, and that triggered me.

Other participants discussed how they had been harmed by other expressions of their incapability. Participants illustrated how these feelings of competition could even harm Natives' relationships with other Natives. Jenna shared an example of this by sharing a story about her two local women, both advocates for the Native American community in her area. Although their being advocates should mean that these women would likely choose to come together to act as a united force for change, in fact, has not:

There is a lot of lateral violence between Indigenous women, and again, [this has] taught to them by the colonizing culture, this idea that the pieces of the pie are limited. The respect that we can give you as an indigenous woman is limited. Therefore, you must defend that position against other indigenous women who may rather share the spotlight rather than share the circle, that is, what the colonizing structure has established. Well, we're only going to give this grant to one indigenous woman. You guys fight it out, figure it out. And it becomes exactly that. We have indigenous organizations here in town.

There's one, and then not three blocks away, there's another one. These two organizations are run by women who will have nothing to do with each other.

The forced divide for resources amongst Native women is exceptionally harmful as, for many groups, the places where Native Americans can communicate and congregate with one another should be some of the safest feeling places for Indigenous tribal members. These groups act as a place in which Native women can be fully themselves and not have to worry about explaining their race or justifying how “much” Native American they are. Such invasive questions lead them to have to answer questions they are often uncomfortable with. The questions are sometimes even downright jaw-dropping, such as “Do you all still live in teepees?” The teepee question was asked to Iris when she was interviewing for her Ph.D. candidacy at universities. Living in teepees is often still affiliated with Native Americans, despite the fact that the assumption is extremely outdated. Iris shared this as an example of how claiming her Native heritage could negatively affect her academically. When she disclosed her heritage on her application, she realized it might change how she was seen by the admissions committee. However, she did not expect to be asked whether she grew up in a teepee. She chose to answer sarcastically, “Yeah, because we’ve been living in teepees for years.”

After this experience, she chose not to attend that University and to look elsewhere, to find a university where she was able to feel like a part of a group, not some sort of previously ostracized exhibit in a human zoo turned academic. The tone of her voice as she explained this to me illustrated her frustrations as she was used to explaining her heritage and culture to someone who was essentially viewing it as a Disney movie. These misconceptions are still common today and further divide Native women from mainstream majority groups, causing them to feel perpetually isolated.

Conclusion

Through my conversations many women were able to share their life experiences and what they believe has shaped them. A variety of different Native women shared their stories with me, from women who were raised on their tribal lands to those who were unaware of their heritage until adulthood. Overall, all participants were proud of their Native heritage, and, despite the challenges that it may cause or have caused in the past, they all stated that they would not wish to change it. In speaking with Native American women from tribal nations reaching the coast of Virginia to the state of Oregon, I found that many things were different about participants. However, the one tie that they all shared was a Native heritage. Regardless of tribe or location, all these women were attempting to negotiate what it was to be Native in a White-dominant world.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The present study gave insight into how Native American women discuss their self-perceptions and allowed them to share their stories through oral history regarding a variety of themes (culture, spirituality in nature, in-group vs, out-group, belonging and social competition, personality/individualism, group cohesion/group polarization, duality, and power). The guiding theories of self-categorization theory (Turner, 1999), standpoint theory (Harding, 2020), and social identity theory (Trepte & Loy, 2017) provided direction for the creation of the semi-structured interview protocol used in this study. Within this study, Native American female participants gave examples of how being Native affected them.

This study demonstrated that many Native American women may feel as though their culture is different than that of the dominant White majority. Many Native women may also find that they believe they have a stronger connection to nature and the earth than their peers of non-Native heritage, also citing that often they feel more spiritual in general. Participants also gave insight into how being a Native American women affected them in group settings, often causing them to be out-group members (Turner, 1999) with many dominant majority groups but an in-group member with fellow Natives. The feeling of wanting to belong also affected participants when it came to social competition as some women chose to go against the dominant majority's in-group and positively distinguish their out-group by creating stronger bonds with their Native American friends and family (Trepte & Loy, 2017). However, this wasn't always the case, as a result of wanting to be accepted and seen as a part of the dominant majority's un-group, some Native American women may attempt to meld with the dominant white majority creating group cohesion (Turner, 1999). Although others may embrace their own personality and the collectivist culture that many Native cultures provide (Trafimow & Smith, 1998), this desire to rely on other

community members differs greatly from the individualistic culture of modern Americans. Many participants also spoke about the duality (Turner, 1999) that they feel in their everyday lives, specifically in reference to *walking in two worlds*, by being both Native American and a modern American. Finally, many participants discussed just how deeply being Native American women affected their views, opinions, and often lived experiences and how they likely feel that they would not be the same person that they are today if they were not Native (Harding, 2020).

Native Women's Self-Perceptions and the Media

The first research objective was to allow Native American women to discuss their perspectives on how their self-perception relates to mass media portrayals of Native women as well as the popularized U.S. opinions of the ideal woman and how Native created ethnic media went against these false portrayals (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). In addition to this, many participants also spoke about how they felt different in terms of society for many reasons, including their skin tone. This brought about the discussion of how media often reflect the views of a dominant culture, which in the case of the United States is White American views and social norms.

When speaking about themselves, Native American women displayed how social identity theory (Turner, 1999) allows one to make sense of how they identify with others, both Native and non-Native, when many participants made it a point to mention certain Native characteristics that they associated themselves with, such as feeling at peace and nature, as well as noting that many of their other friends did not agree with them. Through this example, participants were able to negotiate who they were in conjunction with who they weren't by examining the relationships that they already had in their lives. Self-categorization theory also helped to explain the pride that many Native American women felt, proudly discussing their heritage, but also

explaining how they often participated in more traditionally collectivist activities (Trafimow & Smith, 1998), such as being active members in their tribal communities.

Self-categorization theory gave insight into how some women associated themselves within groups. This consisted of describing times in which they felt as if they were a part of a group and in which they felt that they were clearly not. Many participants spoke about times in which they felt uncomfortable referencing their Native American heritage and often chose not to as a result of their discomfort, such as when the topics of alcoholism (Skewes & Blume, 2019) and stereotypical Native portrayals and false Native were discussed, (Merskin, 2010) particularly in history courses. Duality was touched on when White-passing participants discussed what it was like to simultaneously fade in and out of a White dominant world as bi-racial individuals (Khanna & Johnson, 2010), often phasing out their social norms and traditions as they did so. This can be attributed to the fact that being Native is not what many depictions of it portray it to be (Aldred, 2000; Alexie, 2009; Bird, 1999; Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016). In terms of power, many Native women discussed the negative impacts that come along with colonizing cultures (Bubar, 2013; Primack, 2020). Such impacts included a lack of understanding of indigenous cultures by the dominant White majority caused feelings of urgency and frustration for Native Americans.

One potential reason as to why many Native American women stated that they did not feel that the media affected them could be attributed to the third person effect. The third person effect states that people tend to perceive that media messages have a greater effect on others than themselves due to personal biases (Davison, 1983). The third person if it can be seen when someone is discussing media and decides that they believe they will not be influenced, however, someone else may be persuaded to believe the media message. As for my Native American

participants, third person effect could have attributed to the lack of discussion around how they feel media affects them. As many women discussed how they identified as strong, yet also discussed how often they felt they had no power or little power in situations. This dichotomy may have led Native American women to believe that they had to be strong whenever possible, whether that be to persuasion by the media or another situation. This strength may make Native American women feel as though they are less likely to be impacted by media messages than those with more impressionable minds, a belief directly linked to third person affect. The warnings that Native American women gave about trusting the media may display how they are attempting to help those who they believe could be more affected by media than they believe they are.

Cultural Identity and Self-Perception

The second research objective was intended to give insight into how Native American women negotiated their cultural identities and self-perception both within their in-group culture and their out-group culture (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Many Native American women spoke about how they often felt torn between two cultures, often living as both White and Native to varying degrees depending upon their racial background and their ability to pass for another race (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Participants discussed how they often felt closer bonds amongst those who were Native themselves in comparison to that of their friends who were White or were of another minority background (Tajfel, 1978).

In this study, social identity theory (Trepte & Loy, 2017) helped me to interpret the Native American women's reflections when they discussed where they felt they fit within their greater community and even the world. By sharing their stories of both triumphs, trauma, and growth, participants were able to negotiate where they felt their place in the world was. Many of

the stories shared discussed topics such as cultural norms both in their Native groups (Tajfel, 1978) and outside of them, and physical appearance (Zhang, 2012). Within these reflections, participants shared memories of explaining and embracing their heritage (Tajfel, 1978). The idea that Native American people have been taught that there are only so many resources to go around was a popular touchpoint, and many participants chose to use it as the reasoning behind why there have been both intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflicts across many indigenous nations within the United States. Many participants also spoke about how they felt they were not fully accepted by non-Native American family members due to their heritage. Participants often experienced a lack of acknowledgment for their Nativeness or strong underestimations of what it meant to be indigenous.

Self-Perception and Viewpoints of Native American Women

The final research objective was intended to provide context into how a Native American woman negotiates her self-perception when group membership is discussed. Often, participants stated that they have the same relationships with those of a Native heritage as they do with those of other racial and cultural backgrounds. However, once they began speaking about what they enjoyed doing, many participants would realize that they have certain friends that they do certain things with. For example, with one friend who is Native, a participant would go hiking, but with a friend who was White, they would typically spend their time shopping or going to lunch. When participants began to analyze themselves directly against that of their friends of non-Native heritage as well as Native heritage, it appeared that they felt they were different than other members of their community.

Standpoint theory (Harding, 2020) aided in my understanding how participants' discussion of topics of race, culture, and social class identification could be understood. Many

participants discuss these categories in an integrated way as often culture blends into social class when it comes to social norms. For example, when discussing the lives of their parents, many participants discussed the poverty that they faced, and often blamed their tribal communities for it. Often, participants heard stories from elder family about the hardships they faced because they were Native Americans.

Standpoint theory (Harding, 2020) also provided insight into how Native American women felt when they were living in the White world while also acknowledging and embracing their Native heritage, a unique experience. This was discussed through both negative and positive experiences that Native American women had endured due to their heritage. In terms of negative experiences, many Native American women discussed how often those close to them would question their heritage, causing participants to feel as though they had to prove themselves, negatively impacting their self-esteem and identity (Porter & Washington, 1993). In terms of positive experiences, many Native American women discussed participating in Native American cultural events, often giving them a positive self-esteem boost and making them feel proud of the racial and cultural Native background (Ramasubramanian et al., 2017). Participants also spoke about the experiences that they had due to their biracial identities in terms of how things such as holidays were celebrated. Many Native women and their families chose to participate in traditional American holidays, often rooted in Christianity despite their religious beliefs and racial background. This created a multiracial culture for many (Williams-León, 2001; Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

Strengths/Limitations

This study had both strengths and weaknesses. The finding that many Native American women feel connected to other Native American women further add to Covarrubias and Fryberg's (2015) research on the importance of self-relevant impacts on Native Americans through seeing other Native American women in modern spaces, as well as Harman's (2017) research conducted on how Native American culture affects self-perception positively. In addition to this, women who participated in the study had ages that ranged from 67 to 19, providing insight into multiple generations of Native American women. Another strength that the study had was the fact that seven different tribal nations were represented by members who participated. Native American women who participated in this study were both women who have lived on their tribal lands as well as women who have never visited their tribal lands, do not have tribal lands, or have never lived on them. This facilitated varied responses as the experience of living on tribal lands was spoken about multiple times by participants who did reside on them at some point in their lives. One limitation that this study faced was a lack of participation by eligible Native American women. This may be because of the many traumas faced by the Native American community that has bred a distrust for research focusing specifically on the minority group. As a result of this, much of the sample utilized for this study had to be collected via convenience sampling in terms of network and snowball sampling. The researcher had to attempt and connect with people who were able to direct them to participants to contact rather than being able to have participants respond to research calls directly and unprompted. If it contained a smaller sample size on a larger scale, the results of the study may have been different, giving more insight into certain topics that were discussed throughout the interviews conducted.

Another found was the way that the media portion of the study was conducted. Participants were asked about their overall feelings of the media as well as well as specific questions about media such as if they related to any characters on the media they consumed many participants had very limited answers. If participants had been provided examples of media either prior to or during our interview, they may have been better able to provide insight into the topic of media. This limitation may have been caused by my desire to have organic conversation with participants rather than a more directed interview. Future researchers might present Native women with specific media images, as a sort of reception study, to have them respond to these images. Participants reported little impact by the media. It is possible that they simply do not see many people like them represented in media and so do not form a connection with the media that they are consuming. Or the finding could be a result of the third-person effect, in which people are not aware of media's influences on them. Research could explore Native American women's feelings of ethnic identification and self-esteem as a result of their media viewing patterns, through social scientific research, to explore this possible effect.

Future Research

In future research, as discussed above, providing Native American participants with examples of media may elicit a clearer reaction rather than having them recall their memories of media. Future research might also explore more precise reasons why Native American women feel the ways that they do in terms of self-perception as well as media and how the two interact with one another. Another possible research area can be found in synthesizing the differences between Native American women and Native American men in terms of self-perception in an attempt to see if gender identification directly affects Natives' views of themselves. Finally, a third research area that may be beneficial to the Native American community may look into if

there is a difference in terms of tribal identification and pride. The difference lies particularly between that of Native Americans who either currently reside or previously resided on their tribal lands and Native Americans who have never resided in their tribal lands either. In addition, some women were raised in a different area than where their tribal lands are located despite their tribal nation owning lands. In future research on Native American women, I believe that it is important to focus on how Native American women are different from White women, despite the fact that many of them have been raised and live in a White world. As the Native American community is a marginalized community that has faced many traumas from The United States government and researchers alike, it is important to be cognizant of this and assure that research is not only ethical but also serves the Native American community. If researchers keep the interests of Native American communities in mind throughout the research process, it is more likely that participants will actively volunteer and agree to participate in studies. Hopefully, they will also individually gain insight into themselves as well as their heritage and tribe, possibly even addressing what it means to be a Native American. I feel that this study has the capability to inspire more research on the topic of Native American women, their self-perceptions, and the possible effects that media have on them. To add to this, I feel that this study may also inspire more research on the topic of Native Americans in the communication field overall.

Conclusion

These findings provide insight into the Native American women's experience as well as explore some possible reasons why Native American women perceive themselves as they do. The aspect of media in this study provides context into how Native American women feel about media, but there was little to be shared on how media relates to how they feel about themselves. Typically, Native American women feel that they are more connected to nature and spirituality

than their White counterparts. This is a key point as many Native American women have grown up living in a White-dominant world, often passing for White or being questioned about their Whiteness or Nativeness due to their appearances. Another point made by this study is that many Native American women do not fully identify with their Native heritage due to family trauma. Because many Native American women have been raised in a White-dominant world, they may view their Native American heritage differently than those of other minority groups as they would have previously been viewed as “colored” and are often assumed as White today. Many people within the United States may still not be exactly sure what kind of lives Native Americans lead; this can be seen through the many false assumptions made about the lives of participants, such as being asked if they lived in a teepee, like Iris was. This often leads to ignorant and false comments or assumptions causing Native Americans to feel like out-group members. Finally, this study suggests that Native American women typically feel more connected to one another than they do their White friends due to the possible reasons including shared contexts and backgrounds as well as shared interests.

While research conducted by Skewes and Blume (2019) has explored the connection between trauma in the Native American community and substance abuse, there has been little work done on the trauma caused to Native Americans, as they are multiracial people, often treated as White. If research were conducted with the ultimate goal of helping the Native American community to heal from that trauma, it could improve how Native American women are treated by the dominant group. Through my research, I was able to access women who had both known about their tribal affiliation since their births as well as those who did not find out until they were adults. Participants who discovered their heritage late in life often spoke about it, sharing just how grateful they were for their newfound tribal community and the feeling of

acceptance that they received from our tribal members despite not even knowing about their Native heritage for many years. Similar to Merskin's (1998) research, which attempted to provide more insight into Native American media usage. My study also gave insight into how Native American women feel about mass media as it has developed around them throughout their lives.

While this study is exploratory in nature, it has allowed participants to share their experiences as Native American women and may suggest some possible themes for future research. More research through a larger sample size and increased diversity of participant experiences, location, and media usage would increase knowledge on the Native American female experience. In this case, Native American women across the U.S. Many Native American women greatly identified with their Native heritage, yet often they felt as if they were caught between two worlds. For this reason, many Native women's perceptions of their tribal heritage and culture blended with aspects of the White culture they experienced. This caused many Native American women to have a multi-cultural identity. In turn, this affected how they perceive themselves and negotiated who they are.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar, R. J., & Nightingale, N. N. (1994). The impact of specific battering experiences on the self-esteem of abused women. *Journal of Family Violence*, 9(1), 35-45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01531967>
- Alber, J., & Churn, N. (2013). Creative Indigenous self-representation in humorous Australian popular culture as a vital communication channel for refiguring public opinion. *Anglistica: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 17(2), 65. www.anglistica-aion-unior.org
- Aldred, L. (2000). Plastic shamans and astroturf sun dances: New Age commercialization of Native American spirituality. *American Indian Quarterly*, 24(3), 329-352. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2000.0001>
- Alexie, S. (2009). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. Ernst Klett Sprachen.
- Allen, E. (2017). *Adding color to your campaign: An exploration of the lack of racial diversity in U.S. advertising agencies*. [Master's Thesis, University of Minnesota] University of Minnesota.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives - by the numbers*. The Administration for Children and Families. (2021). Retrieved November 19, 2021, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ana/fact-sheet/american-indians-and-alaska-Natives-numbers>.
- Amnesty International USA. (2007). *Maze of injustice: The failure to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence in the USA*. Amnesty International USA.

- Armstrong, S., Algar, J., Roberts, B. Sharpsteen, Hand, D., Luske, H. Handley, J., Beebe F., Hee, T., Ferguson, N., Jackson, W. (Directors). (1940). *Fantasia*. [Film]. Walt Disney Productions.
- Ash, E. (2016). Priming or proteus effect? Examining the effects of avatar race on in-game behavior and post-play aggressive cognition and affect in video games. *Games and Culture, 11*(4), 422-440. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412014568870>
- Bird, S. E. (1999). Gendered construction of the American Indian in popular media. *Journal of Communication, 49*(3), 61-83. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02805.x>
- Bubar, R. (2013). Decolonizing sexual violence: Professional Indigenous women shape the research. *International Review of Qualitative Research, 6*(4), 526-543. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2013.6.4.526>
- Büken, G. (2002). Construction of the mythic Indian in mainstream media and the demystification of the stereotype by American Indian artists. *American Studies International, 40*(3), 46-56. <http://www.asjournal.org>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Broome, B. J. (1995). Collective design of the future: Structural analysis of tribal vision statements. *American Indian Quarterly, 19*(2), 205. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1185168>
- Chidester, P. (2012). Farewell to the Chief: Fan Identification and the Sports Mascot as Postmodern Image. *Sports Fans, Identity, and Socialization Exploring the Fandemonium*, 49.

- Christiano, V. R. (2017). Orange is the new White: A look into the popular and deceptively racist television series. *Embrey-Riddle University*. <https://commons.erau.edu/discovery-day/db-discovery-day-2017/Poster-Session/39/>
- Clements, R., Musker, J., Erb, G., Oremland, J. (Directors). (2009). *The Princess and the Frog*. [Film]. Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios.
- Cockerham, W. C. (1979). Interactional considerations in studying American "Indians": The case of adolescent self-esteem. *Symbolic Interaction*, 2(1), 43-58. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1979.2.1.43>
- Collier, M. J., & Thomas, M. (1988). Cultural identity: An interpretive perspective. In Y. Y. Kim & W. B. Gudkyunst (Eds), *Theories in intercultural communication* (pp. 99-122). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463378809369714>
- Connor, J. W. (1974). Acculturation and the retention of an ethnic identity in three generations of Japanese Americans. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 36(1), 159-165. <https://doi.org/10.2307/351005>
- Cooks, L. M., & Simpson, J. S. (2007). *Whiteness, pedagogy, performance: Dis/placing race*. Lexington Books.
- Covarrubias, R., & Fryberg, S. A. (2015). The impact of self-relevant representations on school belonging for Native American students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 21(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037819>
- Cuddy, A. J. C., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2007). The BIAS map: Behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 631-648. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.4.631>

- Davis, L. R. (2002). The problems with Native American mascots. *Multicultural Education, 9*(4), 11.
- Davison, W. P. (1983). The third-person effect in communication. *Public opinion quarterly, 47*(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268763>
- Dickens C., (1853). "The noble savage." *Household Words, 11*, 337-339.
- Dixon, T. L. (2004). Racialized portrayals of reporters and criminals on local television news. In R. A. Lind (Ed.), *Race/gender/media: Considering diversity across audiences, content, and producers* (pp. 132–145). Boston, MA: Pearson.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351630276>
- Donaldson, L. E. (1999). On medicine women and White shame-ans: New Age Native Americanism and commodity fetishism as pop culture feminism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 24*(3), 677-696. <https://doi.org/10.1086/495369>
- Dong, L., Lin, C., Li, T., Dou, D., & Zhou, L. (2015). The relationship between cultural identity and self-esteem among Chinese Uyghur college students: The mediating role of acculturation attitudes. *Psychological reports, 117*(1), 302-318.
<https://doi.org/10.2466/17.07.pr0.117c12z8>
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R., & Gilio-Whitaker, D. (2016) *What's behind the myth of Native American alcoholism?* Pacific Standard. <https://psmag.com/news/whats-behind-the-myth-of-Native-american-alcoholism>.
- Edgerton, G., & Jackson, K. M. (1996). Redesigning Pocahontas: Disney, the "White man's Indian," and the marketing of dreams. *Journal of Popular Film and Television, 24*(2), 90-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956051.1996.9943718>

- Ellithorpe, M. E., Ewoldsen, D. R., & Porreca, K. (2018). Die, foul creature! How the supernatural genre affects attitudes toward out-groups through strength of human identity. *Communication Research*, 45(4), 502-524.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215609674>
- Entman, R. (1994). Representation and reality in the portrayal of Blacks on network television news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 71, 509-520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909407100303>
- Entman, R. M. (2020). African Americans according to TV news. In *The media in black and White* (pp. 29-36). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351303484-6>
- Foss, K. A., & Foss, S. K. (1994). Personal experience as evidence in feminist scholarship. *Western Journal of Communication*, 58(1), 39-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319409374482>
- Freeman, F. (2018). Do I look like I have an attitude: How stereotypes of Black women on television adversely impact Black female defendants through the implicit bias of jurors. *Drexel L. Rev.*, 11, 651. <https://www.racism.org/articles/law-and-justice/criminal-justice-and-racism/136-criminal-justice-generally/2926-do-i-look-like-i-have-an>
- Gabriel, M., Goldberg, E. (Directors). (1995). *Pocahontas* [Film]. Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation.
- Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation analysis: An overview. *Mass Communication and Society*, 1(3-4), 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.1998.9677855>
- Gerbner, G. (1973). Cultural indicators: The third voice. In G. Gerbner, L. P. Gross, & W. H. Melody (Eds.), *Communication technology and social policy* (pp. 555–573). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

- Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation analysis: An overview. *Mass communication and society*, 1(3-4), 175-194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.1998.9677855>.
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 172–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x>
- Greenberg, B. S., & Worrell, T. R. (2007). New Faces on television: A 12-season replication. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 18(4), 277–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170701653651>
- Geronimi, C., Jackson, W., Luske, H. (Directors). (1955). *Lady and the Tramp*. [Film]. Walt Disney.
- Gilman, S. L. (1999). *Making the body beautiful: A cultural history of aesthetic surgery*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/106.1.134>
- Gonzales-Backen, M. A., Dumka, L. E., Millsap, R. E., Yoo, H. C., Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., & Vazsonyi, A. T. (2015). The role of social and personal identities in self-esteem among ethnic minority college students. *Identity*, 15(3), 202-220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2015.1055532>
- Harding, S. (2020). Standpoint Theories: Productively controversial. *Feminist Theory Reader* (pp. 324-328). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003001201-38>
- Harman, M. (2017). The interaction of culture, self-perception, and depression in Native American youth. *Michigan Sociological Review*, 31, 152-172. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26284788>
- Harp, D., Harlow, S., & Loke, J. (2013). The symbolic annihilation of women in globalization discourse: The same old story in U.S. newsmagazines. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 21(5), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2013.842434>

- Hoffman, A. J., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Shaheed, J. (2021). Ethnic-racial identity, gender identity, and well-being in Cherokee early adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 27*(1), 60. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000354>
- Hughes, M., Kiecolt, K. J., Keith, V. M., & Demo, D. H. (2015). Racial identity and well-being among African Americans. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 78*(1), 25-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272514554043>
- Hurley, R. J., Jensen, J., Weaver, A., & Dixon, T. (2015). Viewer ethnicity matters: Black crime in TV News and its impact on decisions regarding public policy. *Journal of Social Issues, 71*(1), 155-170. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12102>
- Indian Health Service. Trends in Indian Health: 2014 Edition. 2014. <https://www.ihs.gov/dps/index.cfm/publications/trends2014/>
- Jack, K. (Director). (1944). *Commando Duck*. [Film]. Walt Disney Productions.
- Jackson, W., Ferguson, N., Elliotte, J., Armstrong, S., Sharpsteen, B., Roberts, B., & Kinney, J. (Directors). (1941). *Dumbo* [Film]. Walt Disney Productions.
- Jackson W., Foster H. (Directors). (1946). *Song of the South* [Film]. Walt Disney Productions.
- Johri, A., Heyman-Schrum, C., Ruiz, D., Malik, A., Karbasian, H., Handa, R., & Purohit, H. (2018, June). More Than an Engineer: Intersectional Self-Expressions in a Hashtag Activism Campaign for Engineering Diversity. In *Proceedings of the 1st ACM SIGCAS Conference on Computing and Sustainable Societies* (pp. 1-5). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3209811.3212700>
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 26*(3), 369-386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500200169>

- Kemper, K. R. (2014). "Geronimo!" The Ideologies of Colonial and Indigenous Masculinities in Historical and Contemporary Representations about Apache Men. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 29(2), 39-62. <https://doi.org/10.5749/wicazosareview.29.2.0039>
- Khanna, N., & Johnson, C. (2010). Passing as black: Racial identity work among biracial Americans. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 73(4), 380-397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272510389014>
- Kinefuchi, E., & Orbe, M. (2008). Situating oneself in a racialized world: Understanding student reactions to crash through standpoint theory and context-positionality frames. *Journal of International & Intercultural Communication*, 1(1), 70–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050701742909>
- Klein, Keiton A., "Latino/a Presence in Media" (2018). *2018 Symposium*. 30. https://dc.ewu.edu/scrw_2018/30
- Klein, H., & Shiffman, K. S. (2009). Underrepresentation and symbolic annihilation of socially disenfranchised groups ("Out groups") in animated cartoons. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 20(1), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170802665208>
- Kocić, A. (2017). From the violent "Black Buck" stereotype to the "Black hero": Representations of African Americans and Black masculinity in American cinema. *Facta Universitatis-Linguistics and Literature*, 15(1), 85-96. <https://doi.org/10.22190/full1702085k>
- Kopacz, M., & Lee Lawton, B. (2011). The YouTube Indian: Portrayals of Native Americans on a viral video site. *New Media & Society*, 13(2), 330-349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810373532>

- Kray, S. (1993). Orientalization of an “almost White” woman: The interlocking effects of race, class, gender, and ethnicity in American mass media. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 10(4), 349-366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039309366876>
- Lacroix, C. (2004). Images of animated others: The orientalization of Disney's cartoon heroines from *The Little Mermaid* to *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. *Popular Communication*, 2(4), 213-229. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15405710pc0204_2
- Lehavot, K., Walters, K. L., & Simoni, J. M. (2010). Abuse, mastery, and health among lesbian, bisexual, and two-spirit American Indian and Alaska Native women. *Psychology of Violence*, 1(8), 53-67. <https://doi.org/10.1037/2152-0828.1.s.53>
- Lee, J. K., & Hecht, M. L. (2010). Media influences on Mexican-heritage youth alcohol use: moderating role of language preference and ethnic identification. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 21(3), 199-223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2010.496321>
- Lee, M. J., Bichard, S. L., Irely, M. S., Walt, H. M., & Carlson, A. J. (2009). Television viewing and ethnic stereotypes: Do college students form stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption? *Howard Journal of Communications*, 20(1), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170802665281>
- Liu, K., & Zhang, H. (2011). Self-and Counter-Representations of Native Americans: Stereotypical Images of and New Images by Native Americans in Popular Media. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 20(2). <https://www.immi.se/intercultural/>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Doing what comes naturally. *Naturalistic inquiry*, 187-220. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137333919.0003>
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2017). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n471>

- Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self- evaluation of one's social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *18*, 302–318.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167292183006>
- Mastro, D. E. (2003). A Social Identity Approach to Understanding the Impact of Television Messages. *Communication Monographs*. *70*(2), 98-113.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0363775032000133764>
- Mastro, D. E., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2005). Latino representation on Primetime Television. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *82*(1), 110–130.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900508200108>
- Masuda, M., Matsumoto, G. H., & Meredith, G. M. (1970). Ethnic identity in three generations of Japanese Americans. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *81*(2), 199-207.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1970.9922441>
- Matsaganis, M. D., Katz, V. S., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2011). *Understanding ethnic media: Producers, consumers, and societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230412>
- Merskin, D. (1998). Sending up signals: A survey of Native American1 media use and representation in the mass media. *Howard Journal of Communication*, *9*(4), 333-345.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/106461798246943>
- Merskin, D. (2010). The s-word: discourse, stereotypes, and the American Indian woman. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, *21*(4), 345-366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2010.519616>

- Meyers, M., & Gayle, L. (2015). African American women in the newsroom: Encoding resistance. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 26(3), 292-312.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2015.1049760>
- Moscato, D. (2016). Cultural Resiliency and the Rise of Indigenous Media. *Media and Communication*, 4(2), 38-41. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v4i2.312>
- Murphy, S. M. (2010). Journalism in Indian country: Story telling that makes sense. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 21(4), 328-344.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2010.519590>
- Musker, J., Clements R., Elliot T., Rossio, T. (Directors). (1992). *Aladdin* [Film]. Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Feature Animation.
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (n.d.). *NCADV: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence*. The Nation's Leading Grassroots Voice on Domestic Violence. Retrieved October 7, 2021, from <https://ncadv.org/STATISTICS>.
- Oh, C. (2020). Identity passing in intercultural performance of K-Pop Cover dance. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 49(5), 472–483.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2020.1803103>
- Perley, S. (2009). Representation and participation of First Nations women in online videos. *Journal of Community Informatics*, 5(2). <http://ci-journal.net/index.php/ciej/index>
- Porter, J.R., & Washington, R.E. (1993). Minority Identity and Self-Esteem. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19(1), 139-161. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.001035>
- Potter, W. J. (2014). A critical analysis of cultivation theory. *Journal of Communication*, 64(6), 1015–1036. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12128>

- Petersen, W. (1966). Success Story, Japanese American Style. *New York Times Magazine*, 9(6), 20-43. <https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691157825.003.0006>
- Primack, A. J. (2020). You are not the father: rhetoric, settler colonial curiosity, and federal Indian law. *Review of Communication*, 20(1), 27-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2019.1707268>
- Ramasubramanian, S. (2011). The impact of stereotypical versus counterstereotypical media exemplars on racial attitudes, causal attributions, and support for affirmative action. *Communication Research*, 38(4), 497–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210384854>
- Ramasubramanian, S., Doshi, M. J., & Saleem, M. (2017). Mainstream versus ethnic media: How they shape ethnic pride and self-esteem among ethnic minority audiences. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 21. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc>
- Richardson, B. K., & Taylor, J. (2009). Sexual harassment at the intersection of race and gender: A theoretical model of the sexual harassment experiences of women of color. *Western Journal of Communication*, 73(3), 248-272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570310903082065>
- Rivadeneira, R., L. Monique Ward & Maya Gordon (2007) Distorted Reflections: Media Exposure and Latino Adolescents' Conceptions of Self. *Media Psychology*, 9(2), 261-290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701285926>
- Rosay, A. (2016). *Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and men*. National Institute of Justice. <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/violence-against-american-indian-and-alaska-native-women-and-men>.

- Saleem, M., Hawkins, I., Wojcieszak, M. E., & Roden, J. (2021). When and how negative news coverage empowers collective action in minorities. *Communication Research*, 48(2), 291-316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650219877094>
- Simon, B., Hastedt, C., & Aufderheide, B. (1997). When self-categorization makes sense: The role of meaningful social categorization in minority and majority members' self-perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(2), 310. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.73.2.310>
- Skewes, M. C., & Blume, A. W. (2019). Understanding the link between racial trauma and substance use among American Indians. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 88. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000331>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2013) Latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Substance Abuse Data, SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies. Drug Abuse and Mental Health Data. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>
- Tracy, S. J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.5613/rzs.43.1.6>
- Trafimow, D. & Smith, M. D. (1998). An extension of the 'two baskets' theory to Native Americans. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28(6), 1015-1019. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(sici\)1099-0992\(199811\)28:6%3C1015::aid-ejsp900%3E3.0.co;2-s](https://doi.org/10.1002/(sici)1099-0992(199811)28:6%3C1015::aid-ejsp900%3E3.0.co;2-s)
- Trepte, S., & Loy, L. S. (2017). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory. *The international encyclopedia of media effects*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0088>

- Thompson, M. N., Johnson-Jennings, M., & Nitzarim, R. S. (2013). Native American undergraduate students' persistence intentions: A psychosociocultural perspective. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 19*(2), 218. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031546>
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups. Studies in the social psychology of inter-group relations*. London, UK: Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/227378>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (2001). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In M. A. Hogg & D. Abrams (Eds.), *Intergroup relations: Essential readings* (pp. 94–109). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505984-16>
- The Radio Television Digital News Association. (2020, September 9). *2020 research: Newsroom diversity*. RTDNA. https://www.rtdna.org/article/2020_research_newsroom_diversity.
- Tukachinsky, R., Mastro, D., & Yarchi, M. (2015). Documenting portrayals of race/ethnicity on primetime television over a 20-year span and their association with national-level racial/ethnic attitudes. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12094>
- Turner, J. C. (1999). Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories. *Social Identity: Context, Commitment, Content, 3*(1), 6-34. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1534-0856\(02\)05011-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1534-0856(02)05011-9)
- Trepte, S., & Loy, L. S. (2017). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory. *The international encyclopedia of media effects*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0088>
- Trousdale, G., Wise, K. (Directors). (1991). *Beauty and the Beast* [Film]. Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Feature Animation.

- Weaver Jr, T. (2016). Analysis of representations of African Americans in non-linear streaming media content. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 7(2), 57.
<https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/communications/journal/>
- Wilhelm, C., & Joeckel, S. (2019). Gendered morality and backlash effects in online discussions: An experimental study on how users respond to hate speech comments against women and sexual minorities. *Sex Roles*, 80(7), 381-392.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0941-5>
- Williams-León, T. (2001). The convergence of passing zones: Multiracial gays, lesbians, and bisexuals of Asian descent. *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed Heritage Asian Americans*, 145-62. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3089934>
- Women of color in the United States (quick take)*. (2021, June 15). Catalyst.
<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-of-color-in-the-united-states/>.
- Zhang, M. (2012). A Chinese beauty story: How college women in China negotiate beauty, body image, and mass media. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 5(4), 437-454.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2012.723387>
- Zhang, Q. (2010). Asian Americans beyond the model minority stereotype: The nerdy and the left out. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 3(1), 20-37.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050903428109>

APPENDIX: NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S SELF-PERCEPTION IN RELATION TO
MASS MEDIA PORTRAYALS

Native American Women's Self-Perception in Relation to Mass Media Portrayal's
Semi-Structured Interview Format

This is a tentative interview format that indicates three primary areas of questions and includes probes (2nd and 3rd-level indented questions) as additional means to acquire more detailed and focused responses. The exact questions utilized will vary depending on how each co-participant's interview progresses, as the interview seeks to provide minimal structure on the participants' responses.

Consent: Have you had a chance to review the consent form? Do you have any questions? [If so, answer]. Are you at least 18 years of age and do you agree to participate? [If no, thank for their time; if yes, proceed]. Is it okay with you if I record this interview for an accurate record of what you say? [If no, thank for time; if yes, proceed]

Questions

Please describe yourself for me.

- Why did you choose the things that you said?
- How do you relate to those within your community
- What are some traits that your friends have
 - What traits do you share with them?
- How do you choose to represent yourself?
 - How do you believe this representation effects how others see you?
 - Why do you/Why do you not like how you represent yourself?
 - When was a time when you were afraid to fully be yourself?
 - How often do you think about that experience?
 - What experience prompted that experience?
 - How does that experience guide how you represent yourself now?
 - What would you change about that experience if you could do it all over again?
- When do you first remember thinking about who you were?
 - What did you reflect on?
 - What made you start exploring who you were?
 - Were you embarrassed about any part of yourself?
 - How did your peers/friends/family react when you embarrassed yourself in this way?
 - In what ways have your peers outside of your Native culture appropriated your religion, culture, or traditions?
 - What feelings did you experience when this occurred?

How do you feel about the media?

- What media platforms do you use on a weekly basis?
 - What about daily?
- Do you identify with the media that you consume daily?
 - In what ways?
- Did you use media frequently as a child?
 - If so, what media did you have access to as a child?
 - If not, why not?
- Did your parent(s) also utilize those media platforms? Which ones?
- What media viewed in a certain way during your childhood
- How did your parent(s) question the media?
- Were you ever forbidden from using certain media platforms?
- Did you ever use them without your parent(s) permission? Describe...
- If they found out, how did they react to this?
 - What is your favorite television show of all time?
 - What about currently?
 - What about in your adolescence?
 - Why did you enjoy each one?
 - What common themes/plot lines did they/do they share?
 - How do you feel/did you feel about the characters in them?
 - How are you liking the characters in these shows?
 - How are you different than the characters in these shows?
 - Why do you wish you were more/less like these characters?
 - How would your life be different if you were more/less like the characters
 - Why do you believe these characters are happier/less happy than you are?

How does your heritage define you?

- In your opinion, how does knowing your family history help you understand who you are?
- Do you often feel a connection to land or people? What about both?
 - How do you express these connections?
- Why would you be happier/not be happier living in a different area or with different people?
- How many Native American Women do you associate with on a daily basis?
- How is your connection with a fellow Native woman different than a connection with any other female friend despite race or cultural background?
- How is it similar?
 - In what ways do you acknowledge your heritage in the presence of Native friends?
 - In what ways do you acknowledge your heritage in the presence of non-Native friends?
- How has being Native affected you throughout your life?
 - How do you believe that your life would be different if you had a different racial or cultural background?

-Do you think you would use the same words you used at the beginning of our interview to describe yourself if you were not of Native heritage?
-Why/Why not?