

2020 NAJA Media Spotlight Report



Sample

Researchers conducted a qualitative thematic analysis to examine news coverage related to Indigenous people and communities, specifically looking for themes. This study covers five online national news outlets in the United States, which includes The Washington Post, The Guardian, NPR, Fox News and The New York Times. The web analyzing site www.similarweb.com lists the total subscribers of each of the news outlets.

Table 1. Data Sample of Subscribers

Online News Organizations	Digital Subscribers	Digital Traffic (as of June 2019)

The Washington Post	> 1.27 million	158.97 million
The New York Times	> 4 million	300.55k
The Guardian	> 650,000	272.18 million
Fox News	> 4.8 billion views	367.22 million
NPR	N/A	77.48 million

NAJA collected the sample by searching the following terms on news sites and within Google: “Native,” “Native Americans,” “Indigenous,” and “Indian.” The data sample search began on January 15, 2018 and ended on July 15, 2019. This is a qualitative, not a quantitative study. This means that researchers may not have every story produced; instead, we were reliant on access via each news organization’s site as well as on Google. For this study we focused on the content that appeared once a link was clicked, which was primarily text. We did this to be consistent amongst the news sources analyzed and to examine what information users’ first receive when engaging a news story link. This case study serves as a spotlight on media, highlighting themes that emerged in national reporting.

Since NAJA published its last research report, in the form of a Reading Red Report, twelve years ago, the organization has made it possible for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous reporters to access a number of resources related to covering Indian Country. One such resource is the [bingo card](#) that lists fourteen words; if a journalist uses these words consecutively for a

“bingo,” they should consult an Indigenous media expert such as those identified within NAJA. For this study, researchers scanned all articles for these bingo words.

Coding

Two university students performed the majority of the data coded for this report: a Ph.D. student along with a NAJA student fellow. NAJA board members or executive staff double-checked the themes to confirm accuracy and validity.

Variables

Each coder had access to an online codebook to review and detail the following variables:

- Date of publication
- Online news outlet
- Author of the story
- Resources dedicated to producing story
- Community sources (non-official), identified as Indigenous or non-Indigenous
- Official sources (Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous/direct quotes and cited documents)
- Bingo Card words used
- Themes presented in the article

Analysis

To consistently calculate frequency of articles, researchers totaled published news articles that were within thirty days. The Guardian had the most coverage connected to Indian Country, while The Washington Post had the least coverage.

Table 2: Sample Size

News Organizations	Number of Articles Found Between January 15, 2018 to July 15, 2019
The Guardian	26
The New York Times	22
Fox News	18
NPR	13
The Washington Post	8

Space Dedication

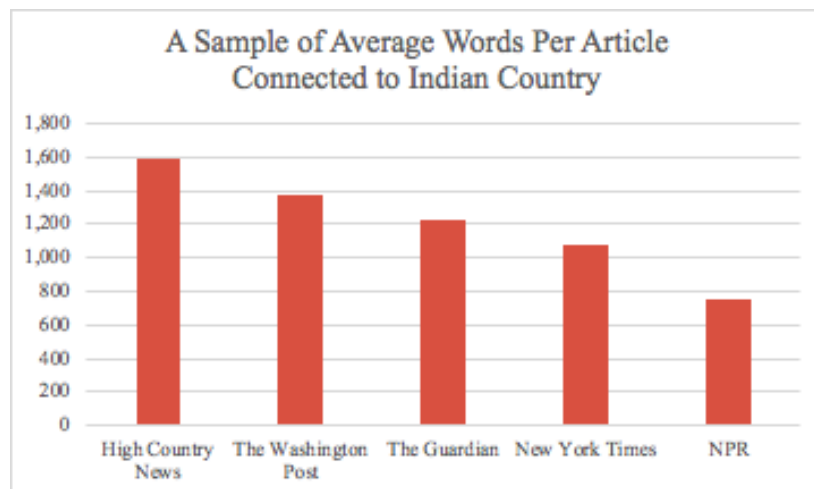
Researchers compared the space dedication to High Country News, a region-focused news outlet that has a tribal affairs desk. Within this same time period, when reviewing a few randomly selected High Country News articles, HCN dedicated more space than any of the mentioned national outlets within this report. HCN had an average of 1,586 words per article. In comparison, when reviewing articles within our sample, The Washington Post follows HCN's coverage in word total, with an average of 1,370 words per article. The Guardian comes in third with an average of 1,232 words published per article, followed by The New York Times with an

average of 1,080 words. NPR averaged 750 words, while Fox News averaged 447 (see Table 2 and Figure 1). (We do want to note that NPR is an audio-based platform, so perhaps that is why it had less writing associated with stories on its site.)

Table 2: Space Dedicated

News Outlets	Number of Articles N (total)=87	Sample of Average Words per Article
The Washington Post	8	1,370
The Guardian	26	1,232
The New York Times	22	1,080
Fox News	18	447
National Public Radio	13	750

Figure 1. Comparison to Newsroom with Tribal Affairs Desk



Analyzing Authors and Sources

Within our sample, *only 6 reporters were Indigenous*-that's less than **7% (6.89%) of all reporters included in this study**. One news organization, Fox News, had reporting by an Indigenous journalist twice, thankfully because they ran her *AP* stories.

We compared Indigenous sources to non-Indigenous sources. While NPR's number of stories were low, it included more Indigenous sources, two-to-one, compared to non-Indigenous sources. All other news outlets had more non-Indigenous sources than Indigenous sources included in their coverage (see Table 3). Ratios of non-Indigenous sources to Indigenous sources were the following, as indicated by data below:

- Fox News: 1.88, for every Indigenous source there were 1.88 non-Indigenous sources;
- The New York Times: 1.64, for every Indigenous source there were 1.64 non-Indigenous sources;

- The Washington Post: 1.4, for every Indigenous sources, there were 1.4 non-Indigenous sources;
- and The Guardian: 1.28, for every Indigenous source, there were 1.28 non-Indigenous sources.
- *NPR was the only news outlet in the **opposite direction**, with 2 Indigenous sources for every 1 non-Indigenous source.*

Table 3. Sourcing of Indian Country Related Stories

News Outlet	Indigenous Sources	Non-Indigenous Sources
NPR	26	13
Fox News	17	32
New York Times	50	82
The Washington Post	15	21
The Guardian	46	59

Bingo Word

The Bingo Card that NAJA created for reporters and journalism educators gives a list of stereotypical terms often used to frame news coverage. When a journalist “*bingos*” on this card, using more than one word, NAJA recommends that the reporter consult an Indigenous expert.

Bingo, in this case, is a bad thing. Researchers scanned the sample for these Bingo words. Out of

the 87 articles, 53% of the total articles used at least one bingo card term. More than a quarter used more than one bingo word (26%). Most frequently used words included the following:

“Poverty,” “Reservation,” “Drugs,” “Addiction,” “Alcohol,” and “Drums.”

In summary, this research used a convenient sample— what essentially we could get access to online. However, this NAJA spotlight on media coverage provides a snapshot of what users may be reading from non-Indigenous national media. A lot of the stories we reviewed included placing people in the past and official-heavy interviewing versus talking to those impacted in communities. Sadly, there were *not* a lot of Indigenous journalists reporting on Indigenous issues within this sample; we feel had there been more Indigenous authors, these stories would have included more inclusive community sources. Future studies should include more broadcast sources as well as the examination of audio and visuals along with the text.

The sheet used to compile the data on this page and within the full report below is available by emailing: **contact@naja.com**.

References

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