

Resilience and identity of the Osage nation: A textual analysis of *Killers of the Flower Moon*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the resilience of the Osage Nation as portrayed in *Killers of the Flower Moon*, focusing on cultural persistence, adaptation, and resistance. Grounded in Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, this research explores how dominant narratives shape public perceptions of Indigenous resilience and agency. This research systematically identifies and interprets recurring themes related to resilience by employing textual analysis. While existing literature on Native American resilience primarily explores broad themes, there is a notable gap in research that investigates the specific resilience strategies of distinct Native American groups, such as the Osage Nation. The findings reveal that cultural persistence ensures the continuity of traditions and values, adaptation enables survival in a changing sociopolitical landscape, and resistance plays a vital role in asserting Indigenous agency. Nonetheless, the study also highlights potential biases in the film's portrayal, mainly focusing on victimization rather than active political and legal resistance. The research underscores the importance of analyzing cinematic representations critically, as they influence public perceptions and historical memory. Furthermore, this study highlights the limitations of fictionalized narratives as historical sources and calls for future research on the real-world impact of Indigenous representations in media on policy and cultural advocacy.



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I. INTRODUCTION

Resilience, in the context of cultural identity, refers to the capability of a cultural system, consisting of artistic processes in relevant communities, to absorb adversity, deal with change, and continue to develop (Holtorf, 2018). It also includes identity resilience, which relates to an

individual's possession of an identity structure that promotes adaptive coping in the face of threat or uncertainty. This structure can absorb change while retaining its subjective meaning and value and cope with threats or trauma without experiencing permanent, undesired change (Breakwell, 2021).

This term includes a culture's ability to overcome challenges, such as natural disasters and encounters with other cultures while thriving. Neher & Miola (2016) defined resilience as "the ability of a system to maintain its basic functioning in the face of external shocks such as climate change." The resilience of a system depends on its vulnerability and adaptive capacity, which are influenced by social, economic, and cultural factors. Moreover, Theron and Liebenberg (2014) have defined cultural resilience as the capacity of people and communities to adjust and progress in facing challenges related to their cultural context. This idea acknowledges that the social-ecological system operates at various levels, including local and global contexts shaped by different cultures over time.

While Indigenous communities worldwide—such as the Māori of New Zealand and Alaska Natives—demonstrate resilience through self-governance and cultural preservation, their historical context differs significantly from the Osage Nation (Rotarangi & Stephenson, 2014; Pratt, 2015; Wexler, 2013). The Osage experience is uniquely shaped by forced land allotment, economic exploitation during the oil boom, and the systemic targeting of Osage individuals, making their resilience a critical subject of study. Unlike general discussions on Indigenous resilience, which often emphasize legal, political, and artistic efforts at self-determination, the Osage case highlights how resilience emerges in the face of targeted economic and social manipulation.

Social class often shapes human social interactions, which emerge organically from various influences. One key factor is heredity, as an individual's lineage—whether aristocratic, royal, ethnic, racial, or religious—significantly determines social status (Wajiran & Septiani, 2023). In the case of the Osage Nation, resilience is evident in their ability to preserve cultural traditions and social structures despite external control over their economic assets. The early 20th-century discovery of oil on Osage land brought immense wealth to the community, but this prosperity also made them targets for exploitation. Government-imposed guardianships and economic manipulation stripped them of financial autonomy, culminating in the orchestrated murders known as the *Osage Reign of Terror* (Roos, 2024). This period of systematic violence illustrates how cultural and economic control were wielded to undermine Indigenous authority. Therefore, understanding Osage's resilience requires an examination of their cultural traditions and the strategies they employed to navigate and resist these hegemonic forces.

As an audio-visual literary genre, movies serve as a medium for conveying ideas, knowledge, and messages (Tawakkal et al., 2021). As the youngest art form, film inherits elements from traditional arts while offering a dynamic way to depict concepts through a sequence of visuals

that create the illusion of movement (Evans, 2020; Anwar & Murtadho, 2023). Literature and culture are deeply interconnected, and their representation in artistic works must be accurate and free from cultural appropriation (Fatha et al., 2021). *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a 2023 adaptation of David Grann's bestselling book, provides a cinematic portrayal of the Osage Nation's struggle against cultural and economic hegemony. The film, directed by Martin Scorsese and featuring actors like Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, and Lily Gladstone, brings the Osage murders into mainstream discourse. Unlike traditional historical narratives, cinematic representations shape public perception through emotional and visual storytelling. The film offers an entry point for understanding resilience beyond conventional frameworks by depicting Osage's survival strategies and resistance.

Numerous scholars have explored the resilience of Native American communities in response to economic and cultural dominance, highlighting how they uphold traditions and economic practices despite enduring systemic oppression. Building on this body of work, various studies have examined Indigenous self-governance, cultural resistance, and adaptive strategies in the face of external control.

Stephen Cornell (2015) provides a broad analysis of Indigenous resilience by examining self-governing efforts in CANZUS nations (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States). His research underscores how Indigenous communities assert nationhood and resist cultural and economic dominance, framing self-governance as a fundamental form of resilience. Expanding on this perspective, Planchou & Baudry (2022) focus on the Lakota People in South Dakota, illustrating how their resistance takes shape through legal claims, public art, and community activism. Their study highlights the role of cultural and spatial reclamation in Indigenous resilience, demonstrating how Native sovereignty persists despite historical and ongoing challenges.

Similarly, Benet (2012) examines the resilience of Native peoples in Alaska and British Columbia, emphasizing how they utilize political strategies and cultural institutions to counteract economic and cultural domination. She discusses how Indigenous groups navigate tensions between maintaining traditional ways of life and engaging with industrial economies. Benet's research aligns with Cornell's findings by illustrating that resilience is not solely about cultural preservation but also about strategic adaptation, such as the use of legal frameworks and modern technologies to assert sovereignty.

While these studies provide valuable insights into Native American resilience, they primarily focus on broad Indigenous experiences rather than the resilience strategies of specific groups. A significant gap remains in understanding how individual Native communities, such as the Osage Nation, have confronted economic and cultural hegemony in distinct historical and social contexts.

This study addresses that gap by examining the resilience of the Osage Nation as depicted in *Killers of the Flower Moon*. Unlike previous research, which largely focuses on legal, political, and artistic resistance, this study explores resilience through the lens of cinematic representation. By analyzing how the film portrays the Osage's adaptive strategies, cultural

persistence, and responses to systemic oppression, this research extends the discourse on Native resilience and highlights the role of media in shaping historical narratives. This focus will contribute to a deeper understanding of how specific Indigenous groups navigate adversity and maintain their identity, broadening the scope of resilience studies in Native American contexts.

By analyzing *Killers of the Flower Moon*, this study aims to bridge a critical gap in the literature on Native American resilience. While existing research often focuses on generalized Indigenous experiences, this study highlights the specific historical and cultural strategies the Osage Nation employs. The film tells the story of past injustices and helps reinforce the Osage people's identity and strength today. This shows how movies can play a role in cultural resilience, highlighting the connections between remembering history, how media portrays it, and how Indigenous people survive and thrive.

II. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach, specifically textual analysis, to examine how *Killers of the Flower Moon* depicts the resilience of the Osage nation. Qualitative research allows in-depth exploration of human experiences, social phenomena, and cultural narratives through non-numerical data, such as words, images, and observations (Kim et al., 2016). Textual analysis enables the researcher to interpret themes, symbols, and representations in films, providing a distinctive understanding of cultural identity (Çalışkan, 2022).

The primary data source for this study is the 2023 film *Killers of the Flower Moon*, directed by Martin Scorsese. The Film was selected based on two key criteria: (1) its comprehensive depiction of the historical and cultural challenge faced by the Osage Nation and (2) its portrayal of resilience in response to this challenge. The secondary data consists of historical sources, including books, journal articles, and archival materials, providing contextual background and validating the film's representation of Osage history.

The analysis follows three key steps. *First*, key scenes and dialogues illustrating Osage cultural practices, community cohesion, and adaptive strategies are selected. *Second*, these elements are coded using an inductive approach (emerging themes) and a deductive approach (predefined categories from cultural hegemony theory) to ensure systematic thematic identification (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). *Third*, the film's depiction of Osage's resilience is cross-referenced with historical sources to assess whether it reinforces, challenges, or distorts established narratives (Rosenstone, 2017). Those analysis is categorized into the concept of hegemony proposed by Gramsci (Cinar, 2015): cultural hegemony and indigenous representation, political hegemony, economic hegemony, resistance to hegemony.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context of Osage Resilience

The Osage are part of the Dhegiha Siouan tribes, including Omaha, Kaws, Poncas, and Quapawa. The Osage settlement originated along the Osage River in what is now southwest Missouri. The Osage were typical of the indigenous peoples living in the prairies and

woodlands of the Midwestern United States (La Flesche, 1995). In 1808, the research found three Osage tribes concentrated in two areas of Missouri and one area of Oklahoma (Burns, 2009). These tribes were the Great Osage, Little Osage, and Arkansas Bands.

For hundreds of years, the Osage people had owned, occupied, and governed a vast territory encompassing modern-day Missouri, southern Kansas, northern Arkansas, and Oklahoma. However, after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which included the Osage domain, the Americans forced the Osage tribe to participate in a series of treaty negotiations that would reduce them to a 12-million-acre reservation in southeastern Kansas, measuring only 50 by 100 miles. Over seventeen years, the Osage tribe released 98.6 million acres of their ancestral land for \$166,300, primarily in livestock and merchandise, one-sixth of a penny per acre. Astonishingly, the United States paid less per acre for Osage land than the Dutch had spent two centuries earlier for Manhattan Island (McAuliffe, 1994). This forced relocation led to the Osage tribe losing a significant portion of their territory and being confined to a much smaller reservation. The disparity in payment for their land compared to historical transactions highlights the exploitation and mistreatment faced by Native American tribes during this period.

The Osage people sold their land to Kansas in 1870 because of the pressure from white settlers. They then bought approximately 1.5 million acres (about half the area of Connecticut) of land from the Cherokee Nation in present-day northeastern Oklahoma. The land was initially considered unfit for farming, but the gently rolling hills and open tallgrass prairies were a good fit for the Osage people. Two years later, the U.S. Congress created a reservation for the Osage Nation in this new land, now known as Osage County, Oklahoma (Comet, 2024). Today, the Osage Nation thrives in Osage County, Oklahoma, with a strong sense of community and cultural preservation.

The Osage had initially planned to exploit this new area for agricultural contracts and buffalo hunts. However, the eastern portion of the land had a hidden treasure: oil and gas, known to have existed since the 17th century. The first oil and gas lease on Osage property was awarded in 1896, marking a new era for the Osage Nation. The discovery of oil and gas on Osage land brought immense wealth and prosperity to the tribe (Comet, 2024).

The Osage Nation's oil and gas resources have significantly impacted their history, both positively and negatively. The Osage Mineral Estate, collectively owned by the tribe, had strict regulations to prevent the sale or transfer of headrights. The separation of surface and subsurface estates allowed individual Osage tribal members to benefit from their landholdings directly. The rapid expansion of the Osage oil fields attracted significant oil companies and fueled economic growth. The Osage Nation began leasing their lands for oil exploration through sealed bids and public auctions, generating substantial wealth for the tribe (Comet, 2024; Sadasivam et al., 2023). However, the Osage Nation became one of the wealthiest communities in the United States. The Osage people faced cultural and identity challenges due

to the sudden increase in wealth and influence. Additionally, the rapidly increasing number of white settlers in the area led to conflicts and tension with the Osage people.

The Osage Native Indians also experienced devastating consequences, such as a fractured community, population loss, erosion of tribal identity, and the decline of time-honored traditions. These consequences resulted from colonization, forced removal from their ancestral lands, suppression of their language and customs, and the impact of diseases brought by European settlers (Joplin Heritage Trail, 2023). As a result, Native American tribes continue to fight for recognition of their rights and sovereignty.

The Osage community, along with numerous native communities, were confronted with the threat of their language, customs, and ties to ancestral territories disappearing, leading to significant impacts on their sense of self (Rolfes, 2023). The potential extinction or loss of languages like Osage poses a considerable threat to cultural heritage and identity preservation (Burns, 2010). Language loss can disrupt the transmission of traditional knowledge, stories, and values from generation to generation, eroding the community's cultural fabric and a sense of shared identity (Justo, 2024). These challenges underscore the importance of revitalizing and preserving the Osage language, traditions, and ancestral connections to safeguard the Osage people's unique identity and cultural heritage for future generations.

It was clear to see that oil wealth could turn into a curse as well as a blessing. The story of the Osage oil is a case history of the failure of law, the failure of Indian policy, and the struggle for survival of the indomitable spirit of a great Native people forced to deal with both the curse and the blessing of black gold (Strickland, 1995). The oil wealth also made the Osage targets for exploitation and violence. Unscrupulous individuals and organizations conspired to strip the Osage of their oil rights through various means, including marriage, murder, and legal manipulation (Klein, 2023; Inskeep, 2017). This period, known as the "Reign of Terror," saw scores, perhaps hundreds, of Osage people mysteriously die as their wealth became a curse rather than a blessing.

Representation of Osage resilience in *Killers of the Flower Moon*

The movie *Killers of the Flower Moon* is crucial for analyzing Osage's resilience. It portrays the Osage community's struggles against systemic exploitation while highlighting cultural preservation efforts. Through key scenes, the film illustrates three central aspects of Osage's resilience: cultural persistence, adaptation, and resistance.

Cultural persistence

This term refers to the ability of indigenous communities to maintain and preserve their cultural traditions, languages, and practices despite ongoing challenges and threats (Giuliano & Nunn, 2020). It acts as a powerful form of resistance against colonialism and efforts at assimilation. It enables these communities to assert and maintain their distinct culture and autonomy.

The expression of cultural persistence is shown through Osage's continued practice of traditional customs and language despite facing significant challenges. In the movie's opening scene, non-hon-zhin-ga (the elder) expresses concern about losing their language and traditions. Despite the expansion of white culture and education, the non-hon-zhin-ga acknowledges the need to preserve their ways even as children are exposed to new influences.

"Nah(n)-nee-oh(n)-pah thek-sheh wah-zhee(n)-dah(n)-kah wah-kshee-theh nahn-peh. Theh-ksheh wah-kohn-dah wah-pah-zheen theh nahn-peh. Nah(n)-nee-oh(n)-pah ksheh wah-xeh ah-xoh-peh eh-txah(n) koh-eh ee-eh ee-tah ee-heh-ah(n)-theh tah ah-kxai. Zhee(n)-kah-zhee(n) ah-shee-dah nah(n)-zhee(n) pah ee-eh eh-zhee(n) pee-oh(n) tah ah-pah. Ee(n)-shdah-xee(n) nee-kah-shee-kah ah-pah wah-koh(n)-zeh tah ah pai. Ohk'- ah(n) tseh-kah pee-oh(n) tah ah-pah kah-koh(n) tah(n) ohk'- ah(n) ah(n)-koh-dah-pee ee-pah-hoh(n) zhee tah ah-pah"

"This one gave us courage. This one has been our messenger to Wah-kon-tah. It is time for us to bury this pipe with dignity and to put away its teachings. Those children who are outside listening will learn another language. White people will teach them. They will learn new ways and will not know our ways." (*Killers of the Flower Moon*, minutes 01:37-01:55)

This conversation highlights the community's deep-seated concern about the dangers of cultural assimilation and the risk of losing their unique language, time-honored traditions, and valuable knowledge passed down through generations. The heartbreaking prospect of losing their sense of identity and rich cultural heritage serves as a powerful motivator for their strong resistance to assimilation as they strive to preserve and protect their distinct way of life for the benefit of their children and grandchildren.

Dialogue is essential in demonstrating the resilience and cultural longevity of the Osage community. Language mirrors people's deep connection with their customs and spiritual practices. The statement "This one gave us courage. This one has been our messenger to Wah-kon-tah." emphasizes the spiritual and symbolic importance of the pipe, seen as a link connecting the Osage people to their sacred beliefs and ancestors. The reference to Wah-kon-tah, a term commonly used to represent the divine or the Great Spirit in Native American cultures, highlights the spiritual significance of the pipe in their cultural customs.

Meanwhile, the decision to respectfully bury the pipe and preserve its teachings represents a time of change and growth for the Osage community. The conversation highlights the challenges Indigenous peoples face in protecting their cultural heritage from outside influences and assimilation. Concern is expressed about the youth learning a different language and being educated by individuals from various cultural backgrounds, illustrating the immediate threat of cultural decline and the potential loss of traditional knowledge and customs.

Overall, this dialogue serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggle for cultural preservation and the resilience of the Osage people in the face of adversity. It emphasizes the importance of honoring and safeguarding their traditions, beliefs, and values to ensure the continuity of their cultural identity for generations to come.

A similar expression also appears in the intertitle moment of Chief Wah-Ti-An-Kah. It is said, "My people will be happy in this land. A white man cannot put an iron thing in the ground here. White men will not come to this land." (*Killers of the Flower Moon*, minutes 03:35–04:30)

This declaration reflects the initial hope and determination of the Osage to maintain their land and way of life against the encroachment of white settlers and industrialization. Chief Wah-Ti-An-Kah's declaration expresses a sense of pride for their people's future. It reflects their desire to preserve their land and culture.

The dialogue presented in the intertitle by Chief Wah-Ti-An-Kah in *Killers of the Flower Moon* conveys a powerful message about the Osage people's cultural persistence and determination to preserve their identity in the face of looming threats of identity loss. The statement encapsulates a profound connection to their ancestral homeland and a fierce determination to protect it from external influences.

Chief Wah-Ti-An-Kah's declaration that his people will find happiness in their land reflects a deep bond with their territory, which holds spiritual, cultural, and historical significance for the Osage people. By asserting that the white man cannot disrupt the dignity of their land by imposing foreign objects, the chief highlights the Osage community's resilience in preserving their sacred spaces and traditions from encroaching colonial forces.

Adaptation to changing circumstances

Cultural adaptation is a process that involves continuous evolution and the discovery of new methods to preserve cultural traditions amidst various challenges (Kim, 2017). This concept is crucial for ensuring cultural heritage remains alive and relevant in a rapidly changing world. It requires preserving the past's heritage and embracing future changes (De Burca, 2023).

Cultural adaptation refers to the strategies and processes through which communities adjust their artistic practices and beliefs to accommodate new circumstances without losing their core identity (Sutrisno & Kumbara, 2022). It involves several key components, such as innovation in tradition, intergenerational transmission, and hybrid practices, and has been studied extensively in anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies (Si-Prince, 2024). It is a complex process that requires individuals and communities to adapt their beliefs to accommodate new circumstances without losing their core identity, ultimately leading to the evolution of

"Killers of the Flower Moon" vividly portrays the Osage Nation's adaptation to cultural challenges, showcasing their resilience and determination to preserve their identity in the face of burgeoning wealth and external pressures. Despite their wealth from oil revenues, the Osage continue to celebrate their culture through spending purchases that delight the nation. This is evident in their purchase of expensive jewelry, pierced arrows, and prime beef cattle for barbeque, rodeos, parades, and archery contests (*Killers of the Flower Moon*, minutes 03:20–04:35).

These moments and purchases signify more than mere displays of wealth. They represent a purposeful effort by the Osage to maintain their cultural identity and heritage. By investing in items and activities that hold cultural significance, the Osage are asserting their identity and heritage in a modern context. In addition, the communal nature of these celebrations—barbecues, rodeos, and parades—highlights the importance of community bonds within the Osage Nation. These gatherings serve as a way for the community to unite, reinforcing social ties and collective identity.

At a time when white people wanted everyone to be more like them, the Osage people decided to hold onto their own culture and be proud of it, even as they became successful. This shows how determined they were to keep their traditions and way of life while dealing with the complexity of their improved financial situation. The adaptation effort also appears in the scenes when the main character, Ernest, arrives at the Fairfax train depot. He sees well-dressed Osage individuals amidst a bustling scene, including Henry Roan, who is described as "very handsome, striking, well-dressed, with hair in braids." (Killers of the Flower Moon, minutes 05:15–06:20) The juxtaposition of the bustling scene showcases their resilience and ability to navigate social and economic challenges with grace and dignity.

The well-dressed Osage individuals, particularly Henry Roan, symbolize the Osage community's adaptation to changing economic and social environments. Their clothing and attitude reflect a fusion of traditional and modern elements, showcasing their ability to thrive in both areas. Henry Roan's image, with his braided hair and contemporary clothing, emphasizes an intense pride in his ancestral heritage. Despite societal changes and challenges, this visual representation underscores the Osage people's determination to honor and integrate their cultural heritage into their daily lives.

Amidst the hectic activity at the depot, where prosperous Osage individuals abound, their remarkable economic achievements are prominently showcased. Nevertheless, this setting deliberately brings attention to the conflicts and obstacles associated with their prosperity as they navigate the fine line between upholding their traditional beliefs and meeting the requirements of contemporary society.

Cultural Resistance

Cultural resistance refers to using cultural means (such as music, art, and language) to challenge and contest dominant power structures, beliefs, and practices (Sharer, 2023). It is a way to resist and oppose oppressive structures or those in power utilizing peaceful acts, initiatives, and mobilizations. Its objective is to restore human dignity and honor the efforts of people and societies in promoting social justice and equality and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups (Cultural Resistance: The Arts of Protest, 2012). Through cultural resistance, individuals and groups can express their dissent and dissatisfaction with the status quo, challenging the dominant ideologies, policies, and practices perpetuating oppression.

This can take many forms, such as protest music, street art, spoken word poetry, and documentary filmmaking.

However, cultural resistance is not limited to artistic expression alone; it also encompasses a range of initiatives and mobilizations that promote social justice and equality (Basu, 2023). For instance, community-based initiatives, such as cultural festivals, workshops, and educational programs, can be powerful tools for cultural resistance. These initiatives can help to build bridges between communities, foster solidarity, and promote intercultural understanding and exchange.

The *Killers of the Flower Moon* movie adeptly portrays the Osage people's cultural resistance against cultural subjection, using varied dialogues and striking visual sequences that powerfully express their spirit of resistance to injustice and exploitation. One scene depicting Osage's resilience shows Mollie and Ernest participating in a traditional baby naming ceremony. In a poignant moment, Reta asks, "What is this wasting illness, Mollie? Minnie succumbed to it. Our mother, too. Anna was murdered. This blanket marks us for death." (*Killers of the Flower Moon*, minutes 1:44:30–1:44:50) Furthermore, in other scenes, the Osage people, wearing both traditional and modern clothing, gather outside the bank to receive their regular payments. This highlights the contrast between their culture and external economic pressures, showing their determination to maintain their identity (*Killers of the Flower Moon*, minutes 15:48–16:15).

The narrative's dialogue and scenes portray the Osage people's deep-rooted resistance against losing their identity and culture in the face of widespread white assimilation into their land. The baby naming ceremony signifies the Osage's dedication to preserving their traditions and passing them down to the next generation. Reta's emotional reaction to the loss of her family members to illness and violence highlights the ongoing challenges and threats faced by the Osage community, as well as their determination to survive and thrive despite the obstacles.

The scenes depicting the Osage collecting their annuity payments at the bank highlight the conflict between their traditional ways and the modern economic systems enforced upon them. The Osage, adorned in a mix of traditional and contemporary attire, represent their efforts to preserve their cultural identity amidst the evolving world. Moreover, their assembly outside the bank reflects their resistance against the economic subjugation and deceit they have endured from white colonizers and governmental authorities.

Assessing the Accuracy and Biases in the Movie's Representation

While *Killers of the Flower Moon* brings Osage history into mainstream awareness, its depiction raises significant questions about Hollywood's portrayal of Indigenous resilience. One primary concern is the movie's focus on white characters, particularly the perspective of Ernest Burkhart. This framing may strengthen a longstanding trend in Hollywood where Indigenous suffering is often framed through the lens of non-Indigenous protagonists

(Edmunds, 1999). Such an approach risks reinforcing a colonial viewpoint, where the Osage people, despite their agency and resistance, are cast in secondary roles, overshadowed by the moral dilemmas of the perpetrators.

Hollywood has historically marginalized Indigenous voices by portraying them either as victims or noble savages, rarely allowing for objective, self-represented narratives (Raheja, 2011). In *Killers of the Flower Moon*, the story mainly shows the viewpoint of the dominant culture. Indigenous characters are depicted as victims of injustice rather than as active participants in creating change. This shows a typical pattern in films where Native American history is told from outsiders' perspective. This perspective often emphasizes stories of white saviors and portrays Indigenous people as passive (Edmunds, 1999). Moreover, the film's focus on non-Indigenous characters can limit the representation of Indigenous resilience. While *Killers of the Flower Moon* depicts the strength of Osage individuals in seeking justice, this is often reduced by the investigation of the FBI and the internal conflicts of the white protagonists. The narrative choice aligns with Hollywood's historical unwillingness to center Indigenous action, choosing perspectives that align with mainstream (often white) audiences (Singh et al., 2022). The lack of Indigenous storytelling control in major Hollywood productions continues to be a barrier to authentic representation, underscoring the need for Indigenous filmmakers to lead narratives about their communities.

While the film shows some Osage cultural traditions, it does not fully portray their political power and legal battles for justice. The film mainly depicts them as passive victims rather than as active actors who resisted and challenged systemic oppression. Historically, the Osage engaged in extensive legal efforts to reclaim their rights, utilizing the U.S. court system to fight against corruption and injustice (Dawson et al., 2021). However, this crucial aspect of their resilience is downplayed in favor of a narrative centered on their suffering. When a movie ignores Native people's legal and political activism, it supports a harmful stereotype. The stereotype shows Native resilience mainly as suffering instead of highlighting their organized efforts to resist and govern. Focusing on individual tragedies rather than collective mobilization, the film downplays the Osage Nation's strategic attempt to regain autonomy.

This omission reflects broader patterns in Hollywood, where Indigenous governance and self-determination are underrepresented. Films often highlight the injustices suffered by Native communities while neglecting their roles as political leaders, legal advocates, and policymakers (Jennings et al., 2023). Such portrayals reinforce the misconception that Indigenous groups were powerless against colonial forces rather than showcasing their organized efforts to protect their sovereignty and rights. Therefore, a more accurate representation of Osage's resilience would acknowledge their suffering and their strategic actions in courts, government negotiations, and policy reforms. By excluding this aspect, the film continues an incomplete and potentially harmful narrative, prioritizing sensationalized victimhood over historical accuracy and Indigenous agency.

Killers of the Flower Moon maintains a visual aesthetic that, while respectfully depicting Osage customs, still filters their experience through an outsider's lens (Bataille & Silet, 1980). While the film brings critical awareness to historical injustices, its approach reflects long-standing Hollywood tendencies to commodify Indigenous trauma for mainstream audiences rather than centering Indigenous perspectives as narrators of their history. This Aspect raises ethical considerations regarding the representation of Native American histories in commercial cinema and the potential consequences of reinforcing a narrative of victimization without highlighting the resilience embedded in Indigenous self-determination (Leavitt et al., 2015).

In commercial cinema, the portrayal of Indigenous peoples has often been reduced to a vehicle for commodifying their suffering, a trend that continues in *Killers of the Flower Moon* despite its transparent attempt to raise awareness about historical injustices. Hollywood movies have a long tradition of focusing on Indigenous victimization, which portrays Native American communities as powerless victims of inevitable violence. While this representation may be necessary for exposing the ongoing legacy of colonialism, it risks reinforcing a narrative that denies Indigenous people action and fails to adequately recognize their continuing resilience and resistance (Schweninger, 2015). By merely focusing on the trauma and tragedy of the Osage murders, the film runs the risk of neglecting the long-standing resilience, resistance, and survival strategies embedded in Osage and other Indigenous communities. As Leavitt et al. (2015) argue, this type of depiction overlooks the depth of Indigenous self-determination and cultural survival, instead presenting their histories through the lens of victimhood. Thus, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, while significant in raising awareness of the Osage murders, misses a prospect to showcase these facets of Indigenous identity and history.

Additionally, the film does not sufficiently address the contemporary legacy of Osage's resilience. While it highlights historical injustices, it fails to connect these struggles to the Osage Nation's present-day efforts in cultural preservation, political activism, and economic sovereignty. This omission reinforces the perception of Native resilience as a relic of the past rather than a continuing process of adaptation and resistance (Leavitt et al., 2015). By presenting the Osage's resilience as confined to a historical moment, the film risks diminishing the ongoing agency of the Osage Nation in shaping its future.

For instance, in recent decades, the Osage Nation has been at the forefront of asserting sovereignty and reclaiming economic power through initiatives like establishing government-run enterprises and exercising self-governance (Dennison, 2017). The Osage have worked persistently to restore their cultural identity by investing in language preservation programs and cultural revitalization initiatives that honor their history and future (Purdy & Ruppert, 2001). These efforts reflect a resilience that is not bound to the past but is an ongoing process of reinvention and empowerment.

Focusing on Native American resilience as a thing of the past without recognizing its current impact misses the importance of today's Indigenous political movements. The Osage Nation, like other tribes, continues to confront challenges related to land rights, environmental justice, and the protection of sacred sites. These struggles are an extension of the resilience displayed during historical events such as the Osage murders in the 1920s and the forced relocation of Indigenous peoples (Ellis & Perry, 2020). These political movements are a response to historical injustice and a proactive assertion of their rights as sovereign nations in a modern context.

Furthermore, *Killers of the Flower Moon* reflects Hollywood's broader pattern of telling Indigenous stories through non-Indigenous storytellers. While Martin Scorsese made a significant effort to collaborate with the Osage Nation, the film ultimately remains a product of a Western director interpreting an Indigenous narrative. This raises ethical concerns about cultural authority, who gets to tell Native stories, and how those stories are framed for mass consumption (Bird, 2018). While the film is an essential step toward bringing Osage history into public consciousness, its reliance on external perspective limits the depth of its portrayal. It reinforces the industry's tendency to filter Indigenous experience through a Western lens.

However, the film successfully expands Osage's history globally; it must be critically examined for its narrative choices and potential biases. A more comprehensive representation highlighting Osage's resistance, legal struggles, and ongoing cultural resilience would offer a fuller picture of their history beyond the constraints of traditional Hollywood storytelling.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article has examined several critical points regarding the importance of resilience in preserving and reclaiming Native Indian identity. *Firstly*, cultural persistence is crucial in maintaining the continuity and stability of cultural identities, traditions, and values across generations. *Secondly*, adapting to changing circumstances is essential for individuals and communities to retain their cultural identities while navigating new environments and challenges. *Thirdly*, resistance to foreign cultural influences is vital in preventing the erosion of indigenous culture and identity, empowering communities to assert their identities, and fostering a sense of historical and cultural continuity.

The resilience of the Osage Nation, as depicted in *Killers of the Flower Moon*, highlights the complexities of Indigenous survival in the face of systematic oppression. The cinematic adaptation illustrates how Osage individuals and communities have endured historical injustice while actively preserving their identities. However, while the film brings much-needed attention to Osage history, its representation must be critically examined. Hollywood's tendency to frame Indigenous narrative through a Western lens raises concerns about historical accuracy, agency, and the reinforcement of long-standing stereotypes.

Furthermore, the impact of cinematic portrayals on public perception and policy cannot be overlooked. Films like *Killers of the Flower Moon* have the potential to shape historical memory,

influence cultural advocacy, and spark conversation about reparative justice. However, the reliance on dramatization and external perspectives may also obscure the lived experiences and ongoing struggles of Native communities. Future research should explore how media representations contribute to Indigenous activism, policy changes, and broader societal recognition of Native sovereignty.

Resilience remains a cornerstone of Indigenous identity preservation. While *Killers of the Flower Moon* reminds of Native perseverance, true advocacy requires centering Indigenous voices in storytelling and policymaking. A more inclusive and accurate representation of Indigenous resilience, which acknowledges both historical struggles and contemporary efforts, will be essential in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Native American cultural survival.

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