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Prospectus

*The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams*, was first portrayed as a personal essay published in *Esquire*, a magazine targeted for sophisticated men. In this essay is the story of a Navajo man and his young son, Tommy Nothing Fancy, who suffered from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). It starts and ends the same way- with Tommy’s imminent death. In the middle are reasons for the syndrome and how common it really is on the reserve for children to have FAS because of mothers’ tendencies to drink alcohol while pregnant. It also highlights the good aspects of Tommy’s short life, with fishing trips and obvious love from his parents. This sweet story is also a lie. Nearly seven years after it’s first publication, it came out that the entire thing was false, and there was no Tommy Nothing Fancy or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

My research question will focus on the validity of the facts put in this hoax, because although a piece of fiction, there is evidence of child defects caused by the use of drugs and alcohol by their mothers. Is the medical knowledge presented in this article real and true? Is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or any variation of the same type of thing real, or completely made up? This is essential to the believability of this hoax because it’s medical knowledge makes the story very realistic in the sense where readers can nod their heads and agree that a mother’s alcohol problems can cause the death of their unborn children. Another question I might propose has to do with the extent of Native American healthcare on reserves. How many resources did they actually have and use to attempt to heal these children? Did they have and use modern techniques or purely traditional ways of curing and healing their people? A way to better understand what was the real purpose for this essay would require deeper research, so another possible question could be: what is the historical context to this essay and why was it popular and relevant and the time of it’s release?

This author is utilizing the effects of a hoax by being realistic in his portrayal and appealing to the audiences’ emotion. The story of his son’s death and his love for him is not something an audience takes lightly and will not easily turn it’s back on its realism to discover or delve into the possibility that it is absolute fiction. That is essentially one of the main points that makes it as effective as it is that nearly no one would ever want to accuse a parent of not really losing their child, despite it’s evidence that points to falsity.

This hoax could have been responding to a number of things. One of which would be the social differences between Native Americans on the reserves and Americans who live modernly. It could be showing the prejudicing the life of Native Americans and the health and education of the children and people. This hoax is quite specifically about one race and the stereotypes surrounding their culture and reserve, therefore I could take this research in a racial direction, focusing on the truths and debunking the lies or misconceptions in the essay.

For this research I’ll be looking at the follow up article about why and how the truth came about of this hoax. I will be researching Native American health and the presence of alcoholism among its people and the effects it has had on their children. I will also be doing a small amount of research on Nasdijj, the writer of the hoax-like piece of literature, and why he portrayed these people and this story in this way. Was it because he wanted to bring the effects of alcohol on these people or pure mockery of their ignorance in their culture.