Abstract

To understand the state of Native American representation at both a regional and national level in print journalism this research applied a thematic analysis to the news and feature articles of the Oregonian and the New York Times published between 2005-2012. Coding of stories was based upon the stereotypes identified by Miller and Ross (2004), including the degraded Indian, historic relic, good Indian, and generic outsider. While much of the media has been cleansed of the more blatant stereotypical terms, stereotypes are still manifested through more subtle themes that become salient frames through the dominant narratives. The results indicated that each of the while each of the frames were present in the published stories a majority of the articles from both newspapers emphasized the degraded Indian frame. Furthermore, while the Oregonian published articles on Native Americans with greater frequency (twice as many as the New York Times) the Times’ articles were longer in column-inch length suggesting greater depth. Journalists use frames to make sense of the information they are communicating. By emphasizing particular topics over others through frequency and depth on Native American communities certain frames become more salient in the minds of readers. Thus, salience can lead to a one-dimensional representation of Native Americans in the media as those topics are most easily recalled.
Introduction

Native Americans, or, American Indian/Alaska Native’s (AIAN), are unlike any other minority of the United States. Consisting of approximately 6.2 million people, at about 2 percent of the U.S. population (OMH, 2012), the indigenous people of America are distinguished by a spectrum of rich cultural traditions, spread throughout 566 federally recognized tribes, as well as a general resistance toward acculturation (Herring, 1990; Sanders, 1987; Cited in Garrett, 1994). Native Americans, more than any other minority group, are also plagued by a host of health concerns affecting generations of families. According to the Office of Minority Health of the Department of Health and Human Services, 12.9 percent of Native Americans were diagnosed with Asthma, and 14.2 percent are undergoing treatment for diabetes. They are twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to have diabetes and have a 70 percent chance over non-Hispanic whites to become obese. In 2001 at 36 percent, American Indian/Alaskan Natives led the nation in heart disease-related premature deaths. In addition to the slew of physical ailments affecting each generational level, the country is facing a wave of mental health issues among Native American youths, between the ages of 15 and 24, who are twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites in the same age group to commit suicide (OMH, 2012).

Any number of these issues makes the community of Native American people newsworthy subjects for reporters and photojournalists. Yet traditions of marginalization and false narratives pose a threat to the fair and accurate portrayal of the issues. Biased reports and stereotypes have also been found to reflect in public attitudes toward the coverage of minority health. Kim, et al. (2010) state in their study on the coverage and framing of ethnic health disparities that negative stereotypes can influence the greater public to blame minorities for poor health despite opposing evidence (p. S224), which, in turn, can affect public policy (Perlmutter, 1998). As the number of Native American health concerns, including obesity, diabetes, depression, and asthma reach the public through an increasing amount of media attention, past patterns of representation and imagery may hold implications for public perception of the issues.

Journalistic practices and routines predisposed news media to the circulation of stereotypes. While stories may not be overtly inaccurate, facts take on new significance when embedded within a greater web of meaning that reflect journalistic use of tone and language, organization and emphasis upon the unusual (West, 1996, p. 13-14; Gamson et al., 1992, p. 374). Native Americans have appeared in the American press since before the nation’s birth in 1776. Publick Occurrences, Both Forreign and Domestick, considered to be the first paper published in the New England colonies, contained stories of Indians, often represented negatively in accounts of attacks and atrocities. Since those early days of American journalism, the presence of Native Americans in stories and photos has fluctuated according to the culture and issues of the times. On a whole, however, they have remained marginalized and underrepresented (Kopacz and Lawton, 2011, p. 333).

No other ethnic minority of the United States has been subject to such a barrage of diverse visual representations at the hands of the White majority, that has served to
shape perception and understanding (Weston, 1996; Bush and Mitchell, 1994). And yet, very little research has been conducted on modern representation of Native Americans in the media since the 1990’s, 80’s, and early 2000’s. While Miller and Ross (2004) assessed framing of American Indian coverage by the *Boston Globe*, from 1999-2001, the focus was upon one paper over a period of two years leaving room for much more work to be done within the subject.

The study will add to the relative paucity of research on Native American coverage in the twenty-first century media using Miller and Ross’ conclusions on historical frames as a foundation. Based upon their findings, I assessed the prevalence of these same frames in the *Oregonian* and the *New York Times* by coding stories in a thematic analysis based upon the dominant themes or storylines of each article. The frequency with which stories appear in the news affect the salience of issues in the media and in the minds of society, and, as Weston (1996) noted, the repetition and patterns of stereotypes in the form of subtle indicators such as choice of stories written, form and organization, continue to inform readers’ misconceptions about minorities (p. 3).

**Theory**

As much as objectivity has been idealized within the field of journalism as well as among the public of readers and viewers (Blaagaard, 2013, p. 1079), the products of media organizations, images and text, are always communicated and understood through constructed meaning. The “framing” concept is one that has been rehashed throughout the years, and despite its wide recognition and use within research, it is an elusive, multilayered idea, with multiple definitions. Frames, according to Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes and Sasson (1992) create the storyline along which narratives in the news are structured (p. 385). Though the concept is suggestive of a “picture frame,” researchers often characterize framing in terms of the structural frames that uphold a building (p. 385). Just as the whole of a building is upheld by its hidden, skeletal framework deep within its form, so too are media frames that provide shape and organization to news images and text.

Due to the ambiguity of the framing concept definitions abound. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, & Ghanem (1991) define framing as a “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Cited in Valenzuela & McCombs, 1996, p. 96). Entman (1993) describes this emphasis as salience, writing, “to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or recommendation” (p. 52). Tuchman (1978) described a communication frame as that which “organizes everyday reality” (p. 193). Perhaps most helpful to this study is Stephen Reese’s (2001) definition in which he describes frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (p. 11). Frames allow journalists to quickly categorize, process and distribute information in packages of
thought for their audience, to break down complex issues into easily understood and meaningful information (Valenzuela & McCombs, 1996, p. 106). Essentially, the producers of content, the “elite,” create and shape reality through the influence of perception (Gamson et al., 1992, p. 374). The particular power of the system rests in its natural subtlety, its near invisibility within media we consume.

In what Gamson and Lasch (1983) describe as the “signature matrix,” frames unify the semantic content of metaphors, stock images, phrases, key words, adverbs, choice of subjects and narrative composition to give meaning to fact (p. 399; Entman, 1993, p. 52). The elements work together to prompt interpretations through emphasizing particular details, triggering memories and suggesting associations in the audience’s mind (p. 246). This content is laced with “culturally resonant meaning” that facilitates understanding, by covertly broadcasting and reinforcing dominant views (p. 246). Framing in media then poses significant implications for the portrayal of minorities in news production. If the dominant perspective is characterized by stereotypical representations of people, the result will be the dissemination of clichéd narratives that influence public understanding of minority people and issues, as well as in the way minorities perceive themselves (Miller and Ross, p. 245; Merskin, 1998, p. 335).

The stereotypes that have persistently characterized Native Americans throughout history, including the Noble Savage, Warrior, Chief and Indian Princess, among others, have done so through the techniques and values fostered in the field of journalism (Green, 1993; Miller and Ross, 2004; Merskin 1998; Weston, 1996). Weston (1996) contended “Journalism has reflected the images and stereotypes prevalent in popular culture...The very conventions and practices of journalism have worked to reinforce that popular — and often inaccurate — imagery” (p. 163). Repurposing Tuchman’s (1981) construct of “symbolic annihilation,” used to describe the absence of women in the media, Merskin (1998) applies it to the marginalization of Native Americans in the media (p. 335). This exclusion or reliance upon flawed frames reduces Native people to relics of the past and essentially steals their humanity (p. 335; Green, 1993).

However, what once was the blatant racism found in overt terminology (i.e. use of “squaw,” “red man,” “chief,” etc) or stereotypical imagery, is now a far more subtle system through which inaccuracies are disseminated. Dominant cultural values continue to direct media representations through less obvious frames and continued marginalization rather than the more overt uses of crude language or factual inaccuracies (Miller and Ross, 2004, p. 254; Weston, 1996, p. 163). Weston writes this subtlety manifests itself through, “choice of stories to report, the ways stories are organized and written, the phrases used in headlines” (p. 163).

Entman’s (1993) definition of framing suggests that in the media, importance is placed on specific aspects of a story, which become cognitively easier to retrieve. Salience allows journalists to make sense of complex issues for audience members while suggesting courses of action (Nelson, Oxley and Rosalee, 1997, p. 222). Native American issues portrayed in the news are therefore subject to the same media constructs (Kim et al., 2010, p. 224).
This salience of issues in the media has been found to directly affect audience attitudes and behaviors to produce “framing effects,” depending upon the strength and repetition of the frame (Chong and Druckman, 2007, p. 109, 111). Framing effects can also influence the journalist’s perception of the world because they too are a part of their own audience, which in turn shapes their interpretation of the events or issues they cover (Scheufele, 1999, p. 117). This cycle is outlined by Scheufele (1999), who accounts for the schemes of both presenting and comprehending news through two dimensions of framing – media and individual frames - in his effort to conceptualize the term and categorize research. At the individual level, frames occur as concepts of the mind, mental frames that are the product of personal evaluations, categorizations and internalizations of the world around us (Scheufele, p. 106; Miller and Ross, p. 247). It is what Entman (1993) described as “mentally stored clusters of the mind,” that help process the external frames of the media (p. 53; cited in Scheufele, p. 107). Tied to the individual is the stage of group framing that occurs at a collective level (Miller and Ross, p. 247). These societal frames develop over time and are responsible for the transference of “myths, stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors shared by a dominant social group or groups” (Ibid).

Media frames are the ways in which news is presented by forming, “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events,” to suggest the story’s significance (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). This is the cultural product of the elite group that takes into consideration the individual and organizational routines of media outlets. At the organizational level this includes decisions in deadlines, story structure, editing and hierarchical influences that influence what and how news is produced (Miller and Ross, p. 247). The pursuit of objectivity is null and void through the choices that unintentionally, albeit directly, affect the outcome of keywords, phrases, images and information sources that contribute to the cultural themes of the dominant group (Ibid; Scheufele, pp. 105-106). The more readily available frames are those which become most salient in the processes of the newsroom and, subsequently, in the minds of the reader. Media frames are not only the emphasized attributes of stories presented in the news, they also include the journalists’ work routine that allows them to quickly identify and classify information for the public, providing meaning to a set of meaningless occurrences (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7; Cited in ibid). Additional factors influencing the journalist’s framing of news content include, the individual characteristics of the journalist (ideologies and attitudes), organizational routines (political orientation or type of medium), as well as external sources (interest groups) (Scheufele, 1999, p. 115).

Thus, the personal, social and organizational pressures of individual journalists are reflected in the news stories they produce. The framing an American journalist brings to a story on minority health issues may greatly differ from the perspectives of the community on the same topic. Friedland and Zhong (1996) describe the linkage between individual and media frames as the “bridge between...larger social and cultural realms and everyday understandings of social interaction (p. 13; Gited in Scheufele, 1999, p. 106). If the journalist’s role in society is to interpret the happenings and issues for the public, a greater understanding of the culture on which they are reporting would
provide a better informed contextual base upon which their story would be grounded. Without this cultural awareness, writers and photographers risk misinterpreting or misrepresenting issues to the greater public through the story’s salient attributes.

### Literature Review

#### Native American Imagery in Contemporary Media

The stereotypes — simplified and standardized images shared by members of a collective group that remain unchanged in light of new data — that persist as frames in modern media date back to the White man’s first contact with Native Americans and have continued to infiltrate books, magazines, television and commercial advertising (Dictionary.com; Green, 1993; Hanson and Rouse, 1987; Miller and Ross, 2004). Stereotypes as frames in the media have always been determined by the dominant cultural view, in this case, white European settlers (Berkhofer, 1978; Bird, 1999, p. 62; West, 1996, p. 10). The narratives allowed these early Americans make sense of the new world around them, confining the unfamiliar to one of two basic categories; the Good Indian and the Bad Indian (West, p. 10-11; Berkhofer, 1978). The earliest imagery of Natives was that of the wild savage, a concept with roots dating back to Aeschylus in ancient Greece, who portrayed the animalistic beings as senseless and lacking in culture (Green, 1993, p. 326). To the Puritans, Native Americans, in their non-conformity to White civilization, were brutal, naked and promiscuous beings meant to be converted or exterminated (Ibid; West, p. 11; Hanson and Rouse, 1987, pp. 35-36). Such stereotypes not only defined what Natives were to settlers, but also what they, as a civilized society, were not. Whether they viewed Indians as savages or as early environmentalists, the perception was dependent upon opinions toward their own society (Hanson and Rouse, p. 36; West, p. 10).

Bird (1999) cites Griffiths (1996) who owes much of the misconceptions that developed to the early work of anthropologists, which later served as the basis for museum exhibits, world fairs, Wild West shows, and silent films, perpetuating Indians as the “primitive other” (p. 62). “The anthropological convention of the timeless ‘ethnographic present’ placed native cultures into a time warp from which, in the White consciousness, they have not emerged” (Bird, p. 62).

From within the Good Indian, Bad Indian categories emerged a number of stereotypes that persisted as common themes throughout history. In his examination of Native portrayals in historical photographs, Rick Hill identifies ten stereotypes that have painted past portrayals of indigenous communities. The noble, stoic savage was due in part to the camera’s slow shutter speed, requiring sitters to remain still during a shoot, a task that was at times facilitated with the use of vices to secured subjects in place from behind and below the chin. The result was a sternness of expression that came to characterize Native American’s as proud and removed (Hill, 1998, p. 141). Bird (1999) attributes this central stereotype to anthropologists who found the display of human emotion to be unscientific (p. 63). However, the anthropologist’s denial of emotion
seemed to encourage the cultural tradition of objectifying Indian men and women as sexual objects, another of Hill’s stereotypes, stating, “the American Indian, whether male or female, was not only noble and savage, but also both exotic and erotic” (Ibid). The third stereotype, the naked savage, played into the public’s perception of the exotic, turning women into sex maidens and men into savages. This becomes evident in women’s often “semi-seductive” and passive poses next their mate (Hill, 1996, p. 114). Portrayals of this nature also served to further distinguish white society as “morally and culturally superior,” (Ibid).

The remaining seven include the Indian as vanishing American, warrior, chief or medicine man, prisoner, object of study, tourist prop, and victim (Ibid). Hill reiterates the prominence of Native Americans portrayed as the warrior, medicine man or chief. These were the preconceived images continually in demand by the American public. Feeding the consumer’s expectations resulted in the heavy posing and dressing of subjects, as the famed Edward Curtis had done (Lyman, 1982, p. 62). Like Curtis, other photographers of the time provided headdresses, buckskin, pipes and other props to essentially create the “Indian,” which, by the late nineteenth century, was often dressed in the style of White settlers. Hill writes that, ”such stereotypes are maintained not for any perverse racial prejudice but because preconceived ideas are so profoundly ingrained into our thinking. Images that do not meet our expectations disturb our sense of reality” (Ibid).

Native American imagery remains prolific in popular culture today. The constructed mythologies that the dominant White culture has produced is found in movies, such as Little Big Man, Dances with Wolves and Last of the Mohicans. In advertising the clichés are found in car commercials, as in the name of Mazda’s four-wheel-drive Navajo SUV, or in the portrayal of a Native American maiden on the packaging of Land O Lakes butter. In sports, the mascots of the Cleveland Indians and Washington Redskins has come to represent “Indian” for much of contemporary American society. Stereotypical Native American imagery in popular culture has come under the close scrutiny of researchers, though less studied, as Anne Weston (1996), contends is the issue of the formation and dissemination of Native American imagery in the news. Weston finds that media and pop culture representations, rather than functioning within separate worlds, go hand in hand, as journalism, through its practices, traditions and presentation often repeats and reinforces popular images (Ibid, p. 2). Walter Lippman was among the first researchers to study the press as a re-creator of reality, who recognized that “fictions” and stereotypes provided a foothold for the public to understand the subtleties of their environment (Ibid). While providing a framework for understanding the world, inaccurate portrayals perpetuate stereotypes and have a detrimental effect on the ways in which an ethnic group or culture is approached by the rest of the world. Green (1993) believes one of the greatest consequences of history’s repeated depictions and marginalization is the obliteration of one’s “humanness” that denies them the right to moral consideration and treatment (p. 324).

Such stereotypes pose problems especially for the presentation of serious issues, namely the health of ethnic minorities. The representations that have resulted from a
barrage of writing and photography throughout this country’s history are both a reflection and formation of cultural stereotypes that continue to influence current media portrayals of the Native American community. Such stereotypes serve only to label, misinform and trap indigenous Americans in the preconceived notions of the White majority, with the potential to engender distrust and discrimination.

News imagery functions on a different level than that of popular culture, as journalism is assumed to maintain a fair, accurate, and thus, authoritative voice in society (Weston, 1996). Striving to become fair and accurate often requires reporters and photographers to present as many sides of the issue as possible. In their 2004 study Miller and Ross (2004), identified the historical frames of the Good/Bad (Degraded) Indian, the Generic Indian, the Indian as “Other,” and the Voiced Participant, as maintaining a dominant presence within the Boston Globe’s coverage of Native Americans in the 156 included articles. Each story was assigned to one of the frames based upon a reader’s perception of several framing characteristics including, “the role American Indians played in the article, the quotation or paraphrasing of American Indian sources, and the use of adjectives catchphrases, descriptors and other semantic devises to describe American Indians” (p. 250). They found that the dominant frames of American Indians were directly linked to story type and topic. The generic outsider frame was used in stories on tribal recognition, in which Indians lost their unique tribal, cultural, linguistic and historical identity. The degraded Indian frame was found in stories about gambling, property rights or pollution. Articles that focus primarily upon the arts, festivals and history, followed the historic relic frame, in which Natives are merely representative of the past, in which Indians mingled with Pilgrims for Thanksgiving before being pushed from their ancestral homelands to reservations. The good Indian frame was used for stories in which Native Americans were the spiritual protectors of the land and keepers of traditional crafts.

In addition to the presence of stereotypes in the news researchers find one of the biggest flaws in minority reporting to be underrepresentation (Nair, 2008, p. 185; Trebbbe, 2011, p. 412; Weston, 1996, p. 163). Prior to the 1960’s and 1970’s Native American culture had largely been ignored by mainstream media (Weston, 1996, p. 163). The Kerner Commission report, which addressed the lack of media coverage specifically related to the Black population, was a turning point for the Native American community as well, as the journalism community became more attune to minority issues in the U.S (Ibid, p. 131). The coverage that resulted, however, was claimed by the historians James E. Murphy and Sharon M. Murphy to lack the depth and awareness necessary to further the story of Indian life (Ibid). Weston finds in the years just prior to the publication of her analysis that although conditions had improved Native American press coverage, communities voiced their concerns over issues of misrepresentation and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes (Ibid, p. 157). The problem came to a head in the flurry of media coverage concerning protests against derogatory depictions of Native Americans in sports, during which the complaints of activists were trivialized through increased marginalization and an underrepresentation. Rick Hill (1996) responds to the number of stereotypes and conflicting imagery of Native Americans in the media by encouraging others to listen
and learn about the issues directly from the subject, "We do not need to re-create the Indians. We do not need to dramatize their story. We do not need to embellish. We need only to listen and take it for what it is: reality through Indian eyes" (Hill, 1996, p. 123).

The consistency with which the marginalization of Native Americans is noted in research leads to the first foundational hypothesis.

**H1: Traditional patterns of marginalization and misrepresentation will be present in contemporary coverage of Native American issues.**

In her effort to explicate Native American representations in twentieth century news, Mary Ann Weston (1996) outlines some of the journalistic practices contributing to the framing of issues (Weston, p. 13). Use of tone and language could drastically alter the Native American image. Up until the 1960’s it had been common in news reports to refer to men in the terms of “haughty,” “stoic,” “chiefs” or “braves,” while women were described as “giggling” “squaws” (Ibid). Organization referred to the decisions writers made on the information, descriptive language and “angle” of the story. The story's form as a feature or straight news article also weighed upon representations as did the selection of which stories were chosen to be told. Weston writes that in terms of selection, "what was reported seemed often to fit White definitions of what Indian stories ought to be. Thus news that reinforced images of Indians as exotic, warlike, childlike, or improvident often took precedence over stories of more intrinsic importance to Native Americans” (Ibid).

In addition to the processes that make up journalistic routines, the individual characteristics and traits of reporters and photographers can influence decisions in news coverage (Bissell, 2009, p. 11). In her interviews with photographic “gatekeepers” of the newsroom, including photographers and editors, Kimberly Bissell (2009) found that many of the decisions were hegemonic in nature, tending to maintain the status quo with regards to race and gender (Ibid). The effect can be an implied sense of “otherness” with a “clear sense of them and us, a right way and a wrong way, an advanced and a primitive,” that separates the reader or viewer from the subject of a story (Clark, 2008, p. 47). What Peter Burke (2001) describes as the “colonial imagery” of the past can also influence individual framing of a news story from the photographers perspective, as those images are passed from one generation to the next to guide contemporary portrayals of minorities (p. 125; Cited in Clark, p. 48). Producing images of “others,” then ultimately leads to attitudes of prejudice, racial difference and fear (Ibid).

Weston (1996) emphasizes the importance of understanding the patterns and repetition of representation to inform discussions today about false images in the media (p. 3). Miller and Ross identify four broad frames that have repeatedly dominated news coverage — the Generic Indian, the Indian as “Other,” the Good/Bad Indian and the Voiced Participant. This research bases its outlining questions upon four of the Miller and Ross frames in an effort to understand the current prevalence of frames that affect societal perceptions of Native Americans.
As the generic outsider, the Indian loses all individual identity and is known only as part of the whole, erasing differences in language, rituals and physical features that distinguish one tribe and one people from another (Miller and Ross, p. 252). Berkhofer (1978), notes that the process of generalization occurred as European explorers and White settlers were experiencing a surge of nationalism, that set them apart as a superior civilization over the foreigners of their conquests (p. 14). The terminology employed to describe New World communities, heathen, barbarian, pagan, savage and Indian, effectively erased specific cultural differences in the minds of European Whites (Ibid). The tradition continued even as knowledge advanced through the years, creating a “homogenized Indian,” that through its savagery lacks the cultural distinctions that define their humanity (Bataille and Silet, 1980, p. xxiii; Cited in Miller and Ross, p. 249). The media’s consolidation of individual characteristics into icons that align with the dominant perspective of what constitutes “Indianness” (i.e. the Plains Indian motif as representative of all tribes) over defining cultural, physical and intellectual attributes results in the symbolic annihilation of Native people (Merskin, 1998, p. 335).

To assess the extent to which the “generic outsider” motif is used in news media this study proposed three research questions that measured Native presence in newspaper articles based upon the amount of attention in number, length and placement of stories, the number of direct quotes used, as well as in the review of whether the topic or subjects were primarily referenced in terms of individual tribes or simply as members within the greater Indian population.

**RQ1: Media Presence:** To what extent does underrepresentation occur in news media based upon length of stories in column-inches, number of articles per year, story placement in newspaper and presence of photographs?

**RQ2: Voiced Presence:** How frequently are direct quotes from Native people used in the articles and stories told primarily from the perspective of the journalist or other non-native sources?

**RQ3: Generic Indian:** Are Native Americans presented generically as an entire group with only little effort on distinguishing between different tribes?

The “Degraded Indian” is a modern variation of the “Bad Indian,” in which Native Americans are objects of pity (Weston, p. 11; Berkhofer, p. 30). Assimilation resulted in the adoption of white society’s vices, such as alcohol abuse, and none of its virtues, contaminating and dooming their fate (Ibid). They are a dying culture that has become degenerate and lazy, condemned by Whites and scorned by their own people (Berkhofer, p. 30; Kopacz and Lawton, p. 333) In modern coverage of Native Americans the degraded Indian motif also refers to Indians who have rejected their heritage for money-making casino ventures (Miller and Ross, p. 252; Kopacz and Lawton, 2010, p. 333). By challenging dominant society through the assertion of tribal rights, autonomy and government benefits, Indians are characterized as “shrewd, dishonest, manipulative, greedy political operators,
on the one hand, and as poor, uneducated, unsophisticated puppets of organized crime on the other” (Miller and Ross, p. 252). On the other hand, the degraded Indian is generalized as a statistic of poverty, violence and alcoholism (Ibid).

To assess the presence of the degraded Indian theme among news coverage this study measures the amount of coverage emphasizing topics of casinos, poverty and tribal rights, as well as the framing of relations between Natives and the dominant White society.

**RQ4: Topical Framing:** Is a majority of attention toward Native Americans in the news framed through an emphasis on topics of casinos, poverty and tribal rights, with little framing occurring through topics of education, sports and health?

**RQ5: Cultural Framing:** Do a majority of the articles emphasize cultural conflict and dying culture rather than rebuilding of Native culture or cooperation between cultures?

*The Historic Relic*

The historic relic is one that has been relegated to the past, unchanged in a romanticized version of colonial era representation (Miller and Ross, p. 250). “The relic [emphasis in original text] recurs in the *Boston Globe* through descriptions of American Indians as figures of history” (Ibid, p. 253). Indians, both good and bad, were frozen in a “timelessness” that referred to an earlier, purer state of America (West, p. 11-12). According to Berkhofer (1978), the static state of Native Americans as relics of history was influenced by the distinction White society made between their civilization and the lack thereof among Native peoples. To maintain their “Indianness” as understood by White society, Native Americans could have no history, which would denote advancement and cultivation (p. 29). Moreover, ethnographies performed by anthropologist Franz Boas in the early twentieth century focused primarily upon reconstructing tribal life and culture of the past that fixated Native Americans in their pre-reservation state (Berkhofer, 1978; Cited in Hanson and Rouse, 1987, p. 37). Merskin (1998) finds that representations in pop-culture following the flood of interest after the release of *Dances with Wolves* are historically based with few instances of Indians being portrayed as modern individuals (p. 341). This perpetuates the notion that Native Americans exist only in White interpretations of the past and leads to the seventh question of this research.

**RQ6: Topical Framing:** Is a majority of attention toward Native Americans in the news framed through an emphasis on history and archaeological topics?

*The Good Indian*

Contrary to the savage or ignoble Indian frame, the good Native American is benevolent, noble and in tune with nature. The enduring imagery highlighted the good Indian’s friendliness toward invading settlers, demonstrating helpfulness and courtesy (Berkhofer, p. 28). The noble savage was handsome in appearance, modest and wise, romantically linked to a time before industrialization (Ibid; Weston, p. 11; Miller and Ross, p. 249). We see the good Indian in the Disney cartoon *Pocahontas* and in the photography of Edward S. Curtis, who manipulated his Native subjects to emphasize the notion of a romanticized people
doomed to extinction by the encroaching White culture (Weston, p. 11). Bird (1999) writes, “Often the beauty of the American Indian body was coupled with a romantic nostalgia, with the rise of the “doomed Indian” stereotype—the American Indian who knows his time is past, but accepts it with honorable resignation” (p. 67). In their analysis of the Boston Globe coverage, Miller and Ross found that the frame most frequently occurred in feature articles in which Native Americans aligned closely with the centuries-old stereotype, “closely attuned to nature, beauty, and handicrafts” (p. 254). Their findings in connection with past literature on the good Indian narrative lead to the final question of this study.

**H7: Topical Framing:** Based on preliminary research a majority of attention toward Native Americans in the news is framed through an emphasis in ceremonial, spiritual, art and environmental issues.

### Research

#### Methods

This qualitative study is meant to serve as an informative baseline for furthering research on minorities, specifically, Native Americans, in the field of media representation. The analysis was guided by the overarching research question: *How have Native Americans been portrayed in the major U.S. newspaper The New York Times and the Northwest regional paper The Oregonian from 2005-2012?*

To explore the recent presence of historical stereotypes at both a regional and national level of print journalism, articles from the major, nationally distributed *New York Times*, as well as the *Oregonian*, a leading Northwest newspaper, were included in the thematic analysis of Native story coverage.

The selection of such newspapers was based upon the desire to assess the national state of reporting while focusing on a specific region in which a large Native population resides. *The New York Times* was chosen for the analysis based on the breadth of its readership. With a combined print and online circulation, the *Times* boasts a circulation of about four million, according to the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (2012). This statistic and the fact that the *Times* includes coverage of local, national and international news, touching on the state of health and minority issues, implies widespread influence throughout the country on general attitudes of the public. *The Oregonian* was also chosen to be part of the study due to its influence in the northwest region of the country. The daily paper holds the second largest circulation rate in the Northwest region (*The Seattle Times* claims just over 1.5 million online and print readers, while *The Oregonian* holds 1.2 million online and print readers) (Ibid). Moreover, the two papers were meant to illustrate Weston’s (1996) suggestion that the greater the distance a newspaper is from any large Native population the greater the likelihood that paper will rely upon dominant frames in coverage (Cited in Miller and Ross, p. 250). Though New York city was determined to have the largest population of
Native Americans by the 2010 Census report, in terms of percent of population, Oregon recorded having 2.8 percent of the population identifying as American Indian and Alaska Native alone in a 2013 population estimate, while New York recorded only 1 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The eight years from 2005 to 2012 were chosen specifically as it appears no new research on Native representations in the print press was published. And while Miller and Ross’ study was published in 2004, the data collected was for the period between 1999 and 2001 of a single newspaper. It was the intention of this paper to begin filling in the gap of information for the years just after the turn of the twenty-first century in an effort to have the most up-to-date data on Native American frames in print journalism.

Stories and reports dating back to 2005 with a primary topic that directly covers Native Americans were gathered from the online databases, LexisNexis Academic and Proquest. LexisNexis was used to find stories from the New York Times, and Proquest for the Oregonian, which was not archived in former. A preliminary search was done to identify which search terms would yield the proper articles sought. This at first included simply “Native American” and “American Indian.” After reviewing the results of this first search, the search was refined to include the terms “chief,” “tribe,” “tribal,” and “reservation.” Specific tribal names were not included, since a search based on names yielded the same results already obtained from the original terms. This first collection yielded over a thousand results for each newspaper which were sorted twice more to include only those stories with Native Americans as one of the primary topics. This was determined by reviewing the headline and first paragraphs in which the purpose of the story is often made known while also reading each article to assess whether at least 30 percent of the main body of text covered Native issues. Thirty percent was set as the minimum amount of coverage required for an article to be included in the study based upon a preliminary review of the articles. At about 30 percent Native Americans still held a significant presence in the articles while in stories below that number Indians were often only mentioned briefly and had little to tie to the primary issue. Both news and feature stories were included in the research. Editorials, obituaries and reviews of any kind were excluded since this study was specifically looking for Indian frames that may be unconsciously applied to news stories, while editorials are viewed by readers as less objective and as a result, less authoritative on the information provided.

From the three levels of gleaning, 378 articles were kept from the Oregonian and 212 from the Times. Each article (the unit of analysis) was read through and coded based upon the dominant storylines. For the purposes of this study, a close textual analysis was not required since the coding was meant to only include the overarching themes of each story, which, based upon the textual readings of Miller and Ross, (2004), are tied to prevailing Native frames. Moreover, because a thematic analysis was the employed method, each article could be coded in more than a single thematic category. For example, if a storyline had elements of both health and politics it was coded accordingly with the goal to simply show which themes are most prevalent in the news.
Preliminary readings revealed a number of storylines. The total topical themes coded for in the research included Business (Casino and Other), Art/Awards, Historical/Archaeological, Spiritual/Ceremonial, Political, Poverty, Criminal Report, Crime/Legal, Environmental/Conservancy, Tribal Rights, Health (Alcoholism/Drug Abuse, Physical/Sexual Abuse, Mental Health, Violent Death, Disease and Other), Sports (Mascot Dispute, Native Player’s Performance, Team Performance, Personality Feature, and Other), Education (Stories of Success, Stories of Decline and Other), Stereotypes, and Culture (Dying Culture, Rebuilding/Preserving Culture, Culture Clash, Multicultural Cooperation and Other). Each category was associated with one of the dominant frames Miller and Ross defined in their study on the Boston Globe as the method to understand where the prevailing coverage lies and to answer the outlined research questions.

In addition to the thematic categories, articles were also coded for story-length in column-inches, newspaper section in which the article was published, whether or not the story featured a person identified as Native American, whether or not the article specified distinct tribes, and number of direct quotes from Native American subjects. Column-inches was determined by dividing total number words by 33, which seemed to be the consensus for word count in a column-inch measuring 11 picas wide (1.83 inches) and 1 inch high (Wink, 2011). If a person was identified as Native American and maintained a strong presence throughout the article, they were considered as a featured subject for the story. This may have included an individual used in the opening paragraphs of a story to illustrate a greater issue, an authoritative source on the topic, the person about which the story was written, or an interviewed subject that appeared and was quoted throughout the story. If the story also made the point of mentioning tribal affiliations of individuals or those involved with the issue at hand, the story was categorized as “Specific.” If the article spoke of the Native Americans or Indians as a whole without distinguishing between tribes, the article was categorized as “General.” Moreover, this research sought to assess how often Native Americans were quoted to determine voiced presence. Since past research points to the media’s tradition of Native marginalization and underrepresentation, a tally of the number of quotes in each article would help determine whether or not Natives were given the opportunity to speak for themselves.

**Thematic Analysis**

A thematic analysis was appropriate to determine the dominant frames of news coverage for the Oregonian and New York Times as stereotypes manifest themselves through the storylines journalists rely upon to communicate information (Weston, 1996). Defined as a method which moves, “beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is themes,” a thematic analysis allowed coding to develop along identified themes (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012, p. 10). From the sample groups of each newspaper codes were developed to represent the dominant Native frames, which were then applied to the data, or stories, for analysis. Thematic analysis also allows for identifying code co-occurrence, comparing code frequencies and displaying
relationships between codes in the data set using graphics (Ibid). This study includes each form of the analyses listed above.

The qualitative approach is typically characterized as a combination of grounded theory and phenomenology (Guest, MacQueen and Name, 2012; Braun and Clarke; 2013). By emphasizing the use of data to support assertions, thematic analysis is rooted in grounded theory — defined as, “a set of methods that consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2; Cited in Guest, MacQueen and Name, 2012, p. 12). Both grounded theory and thematic analysis are flexible, systematic approaches to drawing inductive conclusions from comparing themes and data. Thematic analysis is thus a combination of both systematic and interpretive processes. The methodology is systematic in the development of a data processing system, such as a codebook, as well as in maintaining the link to the raw data throughout the thematic development and interpretation (Guest, MacQueen and Name, 2012, p. 12). It is inductive, however, in the identification and elaboration of themes.

Drawing from ties to phenomenology, a primary goal of thematic analysis is to understand the way people feel, think and behave (Ibid). Phenomenology stems from the philosophical writings of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, that seeks to give voice to “the other” by understanding the perceptions, feelings and lived experiences of subjects (Ibid). In thematic analysis the open ended, qualitative findings are communicated through the use of numerical values. Thematic analysis combines quantitative techniques to interpretation to gain credibility as a method from which policymakers and other researchers may draw practical conclusions (Ibid).

The methodology, while typically used in the field of psychology, is also well suited for studies in mass communications and media as it opens doors to understanding frames that do not lend well to quantitative analysis due to their interpretive nature. Rendón and Nicolas (2012) used thematic analysis in their study on portrayals of Haitian women in photos from the Associated Press Photo Archive. In a two-step process, the authors first used inductive analysis to identify coding categories based upon the 650 photographs of Haitian women in the archive from 1994 to 2009. The authors then analyzed the categories based upon the feminist poststructuralist framework to generate three descriptive themes (Rendón and Nicolas, 2012, p. 227).

As discussed earlier, frames are subtle (almost subliminal) narratives around which stories are structured, that readers interpret through their own pre-existing mental frames. Quantitative research methods, however, are difficult to integrate with subjective interpretations inherent in the processes of framing. Qualitative methods leave more room for interpretive inquiry and are therefore better suited to answer the broad research question guiding the study. As Guest, MacQueen and Name (2012) point out, one of the defining features of thematic analysis is the ability to apply identified themes in text to codes, thereby creating a quantifiable set of data that can be measured and compared (p. 17). In addition, it is a method well suited for large sets of data and is both, positivist, in its need for assertions to be rooted in data, and interpretive in its analysis of the data (Ibid). The proposed research seeks to answer a “how” question,
rather than a “why” question, that demands answers numerically descriptive of implicit Native frames.

Results

Summary

The presence of Native Americans in the *New York Times* and the *Oregonian* based solely upon number of articles published, suggests a relative lack of coverage for the former of the two newspapers. Total, the *Oregonian* had 378 combined news and feature articles for the eight-year sample period while the *New York Times* numbered only at 212. The difference between the two at first appears hardly significant with a discrepancy of just over 100. However, according to a 2010 internal audit, the *Times* produces approximately 350 stories each day (Sternberg, 2013). Over eight years the 1,200 man staff produces over a million stories. Less than .5 percent of their coverage is devoted to Native American issues in news or feature stories, from a publication in the same city with the largest concentration of Indians in the U.S. The coverage doesn’t even match the 1 percent population of Natives living in the city of New York.

The same information, however, was not available for the *Oregonian* and as such, cannot be assessed in the same light. However, the difference in article quantity suggests that a smaller paper in close proximity and easy access to a larger percentage of Native people will focus more heavily on issues that pertain to that community. Moreover, the disparity between papers also hints at two different focuses. Whereas the *Oregonian* primarily writes on state and local community matters, the *Times* publishes heavily on issues of national and international interest.

One of the most frequent assertions among researchers and minority groups of the news media outlets is underrepresentation (Kopacz and Lawton, 2011, p. 333; Weston, 1996, p. 163). To ascertain whether the *Oregonian* or the *New York Times* also followed this pattern of marginalization, this study took into consideration length of stories in column-inches and story placement.

According to Ricketson (2004) in *Writing Feature Stories*, the average news story is approximately 600 words long while a feature story is somewhere between 1,500-2,000 words (p. 79). Converted to column-inches the numbers would be 18 column-inches for news stories and 45 to 60 column-inches for features. The average length of articles was recorded according to topic and year published. Between 2005 and 2012 in the *Oregonian*, stories with Poverty as a primary theme garnered the most significance in accumulated column-inch averages reaching over 250. Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was the second most covered topic in terms of story length, at 241 column-inches. Topics of Spiritual/Ceremonial, Historical/Archaeological, and Environment/Conservancy were well covered in terms of story length each reaching an average of 225. Not only does this data demonstrate importance of topic it also demonstrates depth of coverage. Thus, while particular emphasis may be given to Poverty, suggesting the *degraded Indian* frame, depth of coverage may also imply articles are given enough attention to be written fairly and
accurately, providing as much detail and leaving room for Native voices to be heard (Hu et al., 2007, p. 250; De La Calzada and Dekhtyar, 2010, p. 14). Surprisingly, due to the low article count, Education, and the subcategory of Stories of Success ranked high in accumulated averages at just under 200. This suggests that while number of stories may be low, there is greater depth of coverage.

The highest grossing topic in average column-inches for the New York Times was also Alcoholism/Drug Abuse for the New York Times at just over 300. Overall the patterns of coverage are similar in article length and number. This suggests that the articles covered in the greatest frequency are also those most covered in depth. Neglected topics are then undercovered in the same manner. Taking Ricketson’s measurements into consideration, the average story length for all categories in the Times was 23.3, though there was much variation. Below are listed average story lengths for each of the categories, which spanned from the lowest at 11.35 column-inches for Criminal Report to the highest for Education at 44.6 column inches. Disregarding the two extremes the average length of articles was between 30 and 40 inches, making them high for news stories, while on the low-end for feature articles. The data appears to suggest, in terms of story length, that Native Americans are given adequate attention based upon average article length that appear in the New York Times.

The Oregonian’s average story length was slightly shorter than that of the Times with the shortest at 10.48 column-inches also for Criminal Report, and 33.61 column-inches at the highest for Poverty. The average fell between 19 and 30 column-inches. Compared to Ricketson’s measurements the numbers appear to be on par for news and low for feature.

When story length was compared with the number of articles recorded per section, an overwhelming majority appeared in section A for the Times and in Local News for the Oregonian. Section A and Local News both suggest the majority of articles were news, rather than feature stories that would be saved for later sections of the paper. Taking the two data sets together implies, that, average length of Native American stories for both publications is proportionate to the average length of news stories in general.

Figure 1

*Oregonian Accumulated Average Article Length*
Figure 2

Oregonian Percent of Coverage

Figure 3

NYT Accumulated Average Article Length
Figure 4

NYT Percent of Coverage

Topoic

Percent of Article Quantity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>NYT Average Article Length</th>
<th>Oregonian Average Article Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>28.16470588</td>
<td>18.36938776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>33.25348837</td>
<td>19.13921569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32.14285714</td>
<td>19.63333333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/Awards</td>
<td>30.15555556</td>
<td>26.74807692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical/Archaeological</td>
<td>35.09268293</td>
<td>27.61756757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual/Ceremonial</td>
<td>31.34615385</td>
<td>26.61617647</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>32.36595745</td>
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</tr>
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<td>25.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism/Drug Abuse</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Generic Outsider

As the generic outsider, the Indian loses all individual identity and is known only as part of the whole, erasing differences in language, rituals and physical features that distinguish one tribe and one people from another (Miller and Ross, p. 252). To assess the presence of the generic outsider frame, this research sorted articles based upon whether Indians were portrayed in terms of specific tribe, with a unique culture, language and values, or in terms of a generic “whole.” Articles attributing tribal affiliation to specific persons or issues were included in the specific category and stories without any mention of tribe (or if the overall tone of the article depicted Natives as one generic people) were grouped in the general category. The figures for the Oregonian and the Times overwhelmingly are in support of stories demonstrating a sensitivity to specific tribal affiliation. Quoted Native subjects were often identified by tribal background, allowing them to not only speak for themselves, but also to speak as a member of their particular culture. For example, in the Oregonian article “Taking a stand against mascots that can offend,” the main subject is quoted, “I feel really good about it,” said Che Butler, 18 and a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz” (Binder, 2007).
Generalizations still occurred, primarily, in stories at the national level, when the primary topic focused on outdated stereotypes as with debates over the term “squaw” or mascots, or programs designed for Native Americans as a whole. “Native American school opens door to new lives,” a story on the opening of NAYA’s Early College Academy for Portland’s Native American community makes no mention of specific tribes (Hannah-Jones, 2007). Rather, Native Americans, including those quoted, are described in terms of one people. In the New York Times, the story “For Indian victims of sexual assault, a tangled legal path,” covers the issue of assault on a national scale, and in so doing neglects to make specifications between tribes (Blumenthal, 2007). However, issues and the way in which they affect Native Americans differs between communities across the country, and without differentiations made between tribes readers may view the matter and its effects as equal among all Native peoples.

Figure 6

![Specific vs. Generalized for Oregonian](image)

Figure 7

![Specific vs. Generalized for NYT](image)
To further understand the extent to which Native Americans were presented as individuals rather than generically, the number of quotes were measured per story for each year of coverage. Every story was coded according to four categories, and could be placed in only one; 0 Quotes, 1-2 Quotes, 3-4 Quotes and 5+ Quotes. The data was charted for every year from 2005-2012. Though the highest percentage of articles had 0 direct quotes for four out of the eight years of the Oregonian's coverage, inclusion of Native voice appears to have improved from 2008-2012, as more articles included 1-2 or 5+ quotes. The gradual change shows promise that Native Americans are slowly being given more of an opportunity to participate in mainstream media by speaking for themselves.

Figure 8
The *Times* demonstrated a tendency to be more inclusive of the Native voice throughout the eight year period as the fewest percentages were often found in the 0 Quotes category, while the majority grew steadily from 1-2 quotes, to 3-4. Quotes of 5 or more peaked in 2008 before falling steadily to decrease over the next four years. On average, the *Times* demonstrates an openness to allowing Native subjects to speak for themselves on issues related to them, though there is room for greater inclusion, especially when the average article length for stories outpaced the *Oregonian’s* coverage by about 4 column-inches.

Figure 9

*Percentage of Quotes for NYT*

Dividing the articles by Native person(s) featured was the final way in which the presence of the *generic outsider* frame was assessed. If one or more people held a notable presence throughout the storyline, and was referred and/or quoted frequently the article was categorized in the affirmative by being given a “Y,” while those without a featured Native person were given an “N.” This criteria was meant to be informative of the representation of Native individuality in the two papers. Featuring one or more people provides a sense of a distinct, unique perspective, separate from the Native American community as a generalized body. In the *generic outsider* frame the Indian
loses all sense of individuality and is known only in terms of the greater whole (Miller and Ross, p. 252). Thus, if the frame holds a strong presence throughout the sampling of articles, individuals are less likely to be featured, since the portrayal would highlight idiosyncratic beliefs, values and language. Moreover, emphasis of personal cultural identity reinforces the humanity of the Native American, an attribute denied to them through constant misrepresentation (Green, 1993, p. 324).

Calculated by number of “Y” or “N” articles per year, the research found a higher percentage of the affirmative group for both papers. The difference between the two groups overall from 2005-2012 was 74 percent in the affirmative and 26 percent in the negative for the New York Times. The difference was less dramatic for the Oregonian with 60 percent in the “Y” group and 40 percent in the “N” group. This reveals that both publications were demonstrating practices that emphasized Native American as an individual rather than part of the generic whole.

Figure 10

![Featured vs. Not Featured for NYT](image)

Figure 11

![Featured vs. Not Featured for the Oregonian](image)
Degraded Indian

Within the total coverage from 2005-2012 of articles with dominant Native American themes, the leading issues to be reported and published for the New York Times, included business, with the subcategory of casinos leading the “other” subcategory by nearly double, storylines related to crime or legal issues, as well as those focused upon tribal rights. Such numbers reflect the majority of coverage contributing to the degraded Indian frame for the national newspaper. Miller and Ross (2004) found that stories focusing on “economic development, gambling, property rights, or pollution” often reflected this version of the Bad Indian frame, in which assimilation into White society led to the adoption of its vices (Weston, 1996, p. 11; Berkhofer, 1978, p. 30). In such a frame they become the objects of pity and scorn. This research also took into consideration the amount of coverage devoted to issues of poverty. The accumulated percentages across the years for poverty, however, remained low in comparison to the other degraded themes included in the study. Overall, topics of Tribal Rights and Business received 35 percent coverage (20 percent of which was devoted to casinos), while Crime/Legal closely trailed at 30 percent.

The Oregonian echoes this pattern among its coverage with 34 percent of coverage devoted to the topic of Business. This can be attributed to the coverage of local casinos in the area which provides an endless number of story opportunities over new developments in gaining tribal rights, debates between local White populations and Native communities, progress in construction etc. This becomes evident as stories on casinos dramatically outweighed the “Other” category at 27 percent of total Oregonian coverage. Second to business was Political, with Historical/Archaeological and Tribal Rights tying for third. According to Miller and Ross (2004) stories of Native American involved in politics and tribal rights also demonstrated the degraded frame by portraying Natives as challengers of the “status quo” in terms of government benefits, tribal property rights and the assertion of autonomy, through which they are framed as “shrewd, dishonest, manipulative, greedy political operators” (p. 252). If this framing holds true for the Oregonian, then 28 percent of regional coverage would be disseminating similar negative misconceptions among readers.
This research was particularly concerned with the presentation of Native health issues in the media as studies suggest stereotypes and underrepresentation can influence public perception and, subsequently, public policy negatively (Kim et al., 2010, p. S224). Though 30 percent of coverage was devoted to health, the dominant theme among health-related stories was alcoholism/drug abuse at almost 10 percent of the total coverage. Such figures also play into the degraded Indian theme as Native Americans, once again, are depicted as the ignoble Native, a fallen relative to a once proud and strong people.

Health reporting also reflected similar numbers to the Times coverage, which at 20 percent ranks it as fifth highest covered subject. Yet, just as with the national paper, a majority of the focus centers upon alcoholism and drug abuse. The drunk Indian has long been held as a degraded Indian image that has persisted over time (Bird, 1998, p. 9; Weston, 1996, p. 11). The articles for both papers within this category include positive and negative stories. Some are stories of hope and healing as addicts recover, in addition to the articles of struggle. For example, in 2005, the Oregonian published a story on one woman recovering from addiction in “Dorothy Yahtin: Woman’s road to sobriety still rocky” (Sullivan, 2005), while a later article covered the problem of alcoholism affecting Native students at a boarding school in “Family of dead Warm Springs girl files $24 million federal lawsuit” (Green, 2005).

The degraded Indian is also one whose culture is doomed in the wake of White advancement, disconnected from their past through the trauma of relocation, boarding schools and genocide (Weston, 1996, p. 11). To understand how Native culture was portrayed in both papers, coding included the five subcategories of stories that emphasized Dying Culture, Rebuilding/Preserving Culture, Culture Clash (between Whites and Natives), Multicultural Cooperation and Other. While the highest percentage was found in articles portraying cultural clash (37%) for the Oregonian, the stories were split almost in thirds between clash, rebuilding/preserving (31%) and Multicultural Cooperation (29%). Only 5 percent of articles focused upon the Dying Culture theme, while 2 percent was covered cultural themes in the “other” section. The latter often included stories of inter-tribal conflict.

Comparatively, the New York Times had a higher number of articles in which the dominant cultural theme was Culture Clash at 41 percent. Multicultural Cooperation and Rebuilding/Preserving culture held 28 percent and 20 percent, respectively, of the coverage for the sample period.

With a majority of the articles emphasizing Culture Clash through the quantity of stories produced, news outlets continue the timeless “Cowboy and Indian” narrative in which the Indian as a warrior or savage is a danger to civilized White society (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 97; Bird, 1999). In what Berkhofer (1978) describes as “the Western formula” the opposing sides, the Red savages and the hero cowboys, are forever locked in conflict over land and lifestyle (p. 104).

*The Historic Relic*
The *historic relic* frame was analyzed as a direct function of Native coverage coded as historical or archaeological. Miller and Ross (2004) found negative stereotypes to be present in the historic relic frame, in which Indians are preserved artifacts of an era long past, often portrayed opposite White settlers, especially in Thanksgiving features of the *Boston Globe* (p. 253). In the *New York Times* historical coverage reached just under 20 percent, while the *Oregonian* dedicated 22 percent of Native stories to topics of history. Though not reaching the numerical significance of the *degraded Indian* topics, there is still potential to affect public conscious of the appearance and lifestyle of twenty-first century Native Americans. Moreover, while the percentage for the *Times* ranked as only seventh among the framing topics, it was fourth highest covered topic out of fourteen for the *Oregonian*.

The data was also cross-referenced with publication date, number of quotes as well as the category for specified and generalized. Of the history-related articles by the *Oregonian* the highest number were published during the month of November with October closing in as second highest. This reflects Miller and Ross’ (2004) findings for *historic relic* articles that reflected traditional Thanksgiving themes in which Native Americans become the supporting character in the pilgrim’s story of survival as it has been told and retold every year (p. 252). The *New York Times*, by contrast, had the highest publishing rate for the history narrative during June, followed by December and August. This may have more to do with a significantly smaller sample size (38 history articles compared to the *Oregonian*s 86) which may have not been large enough to get an accurate reading, however, the data as is refutes Weston’s (1996) claim that proximity is an indicator of frame usage. The more removed a publication is from a Native community, the more reliant it will be upon dominant frames (p. 15). In this case, however, the numbers suggest the *Oregonian*, which is located near a larger population percentage of Native Americans, appears to publish articles according to the *historic relic* frame, whereas the *Times*, located near a much smaller percentage, does not.

Articles of this category were also cross-referenced with tribal representation and number of quotes, to determine whether stories of this topic generalized Natives as one people in a distant past, and whether Native voices would be given space to add their perspective. Overall, Native Americans, when covered in terms of history are distinguished by tribe rather than being spoken of as the generalized “Indian.” A majority of the stories from both publications fell under the “tribe specific” subcategory, with the *Times* at 68 percent and the *Oregonian* at 86 percent. Compared to the overall percentages of direct Native Quotes for all topics, history coded stories did not provide as much space for Indian voices to be heard. The *New York Times* still had the highest percentage under 5+ quotes, with 1-2 quotes coming in second at 29 percent, though no quotes were used in 21 percent of the articles. The west coast paper, too, demonstrated similar findings, with a slight majority in the 5+ category at 30 percent, but with 0 quotes closely following at 29 percent.

*The Good Indian*

Portrayal of the *good Indian* frame was measured through percentages of topics that included Ceremonial, Spiritual, Art, and the Environment based upon past interpretations of the stereotype. The good Indian is noble, helpful and courteous to their White conquerors (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 28). Moreover, they are often tied to beauty, nature and traditional crafts, embodying nostalgia for what was lost in their doomed existence (Miller and Ross,
2004, p. 254). Understandably, articles that cover such topics as those mentioned above will perpetuate the idea of the Noble Savage frame. For the *Times*, Art/Awards garnered 9 percent of the coverage, while Spiritual/Ceremonial held 12.5 percent and Environmental/Conservancy 11 percent. Individually the topics are not of great of significance compared to Tribal Rights or Crime/Legal, though combined the *good Indian frame* equals about 30 percent of the *New York Times* total output.

The *Oregonian* had much higher figures for each of the topics with Art/Award at 13 percent, Spiritual/Ceremonial at 18 percent and Environmental/Conservancy at 13 percent to make total coverage about 44 percent. In this respect, the *good Indian* frame is found in the highest percentage of published articles when taken as a whole. Large amounts of coverage on Native Americans in art, the environment, and spirituality can lead to frames of romantic nostalgia, in which, similar to the *historic relic*, the Indian is constrained to past representations of the submissive, but wise naturalist. Despite the more positive tone with which the *good Indian* frame portrays Native Americans, the problem lies in its ability to create icons out of people and failure to represent the multidimensionality of the individual.

**Least Covered Topics**

In both the *New York Times* and the *Oregonian* the least covered topics were sports, education and stereotypes. The study purposely included the last of the categories to assess how media addressed common Native American stereotypes. From the 5 percent of coverage at the regional level and 3 percent at the national, a majority of the articles appeared to focus primarily on the mascot name debates, in which the terms “brave,” “redskins,” “chiefs,” “savages,” and “Indians” were considered derogatory. The percentage of the *Oregonian* was higher due to its coverage of the debate to rename locations in the state from “squaw” to more respectful names. In some of these articles labeling the word “s-word” as a stereotype was called into question as in “State Oks Wychus, Moohoo’oo” (*Dworkin*, 2005) and “Erasing ‘squaw’ from maps goes slowly” (*Preuch*, 2005). However, other than the examples given, few other instances of stereotypical words were used in the articles. This positive find affirms both Weston’s (1996) and Miller and Ross’ (2004) postulation that while blatant Native American stereotypes are rarely found in newsprint as they once had been, clichés now have the potential to arise in more subtle themes found through the framing of stories.

The lack of coverage on topics of education and sports shows room for growth in coverage of Native issues. Over this eight-year sample period the data leans heavily to the left of the graph suggesting that coverage of Native Americans has a relatively narrow focus, primarily upon topics of tribal rights, politics, casinos, legal disputes and health. The fact that health is included in the top percentages is a encouraging as the it suggests coverage is diversifying, though the fact that the majority of health reports concern alcoholism and drug abuse.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate the potential for Native American stereotyping by assessing the dominant storylines in the media at the national and regional level for the early part of the twenty-first century. It is meant to serve as a
baselines for future research in the area and help fill part of the gap in research on Native American representation, in the news industry, especially for print news, an especially under-researched medium.

Through journalistic practices and routines of the individual and media organization, dominant historical stereotypes continue to paint Native American representations in news discourse. The process and effects are subtly integrated into the disseminated information through the development of framing techniques that help journalists and readers make sense of complex issues (Weston, 1996, p. 163). Blatant stereotypical language is no longer a widespread problem. In fact, the presence of stereotypical or crude language was seldom found in the sampling of articles for both the *Times* and *Oregonian*. Terms such as “squaw,” or “chief,” were used only after their triteness was made plain, and as points of discussion rather than descriptors. As common language has made considerable strides to eliminate the most blatant forms of stereotyping, the quantity and form of stories presented to the public continue to shape public perception of the Native American (Ibid). Throughout the years, Indians have been romanticized and patronized, marginalized and misrepresented through the dominant historic imagery.

Four of the five historically identified frames Miller and Ross (2004) assess in coverage by the *Boston Globe* from 1999-2001 were used to interpret the data on presentation of Native Americans in the *New York Times* and the *Oregonian* — the Generic Outsider, the Degraded Indian, the Historic Relic, and the Good Indian. The fifth frame, Voiced Participant, which Miller and Ross discovered in the raw data, relies upon a close textual analysis of structure and language in the articles to identify, whereas this study measured the “big picture” in each article’s overarching narrative. The research also took into account the attention afforded to Natives in terms of news space, using story quantity and length as indicators of news presence.

In general, Native Americans do not have a strong presence in the *New York Times*, based upon the paper’s total circulation of 1.2 million, and ratio of total published articles to total news and feature stories on Native American topics per year. This is most likely a reflection of the smaller Native population percentage in New York, compared to the Portland and greater Oregon area, in which the concentration is richer, at 2.8 percent of the state total (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). While the *Oregonian*, had 378 articles that focused primarily on Native people and topics, the *Times* by contrast published only 212 news or feature articles in which Native American issues dominated for the eight-year sample period. Thus, the publication with the larger readership (four million in print and web circulation) offered less Native-related stories to the national public. This also suggests that a regional paper, with a more concentrated focus has a greater opportunity to produce more work on the Native community, which is also a larger percentage of the smaller circulation of readers. The *Times*, however, which offers a much greater scope in reporting on issues of national interest, may not have the focus, and necessary resources to produce articles with the same frequency as the *Oregonian* on Native communities.
However, the articles published by the *Times* appear to be afforded greater attention in terms of story depth, than those by the *Oregonian*. It then becomes an argument of quantity vs. quality. De La Calzada and Dekhtyar (2010) indicate in their research on Wikipedia articles that quality is directly related to article length (p. 14; Hu et al., 2007, p. 250). When attention is paid to Native Americans in the national paper, the average story length, for either news or feature, suggests a greater amount of time paid to the subject and issue, resulting in greater depth than those by the *Oregonian*, though the latter publishes a greater number. This may suggest that the *Oregonian*, which may have the resources and proximity to facilitate coverage of Native Americans, can dedicate more time to reporting smaller feature that require less explanation and analysis. The *New York Times*, however, which primarily focuses upon matters of national and international interest, may only cover Native issues when they are of interest to the entire nation. Frequency would thus be less, but more space would be necessary to dissect the issue for readers.

Both publications showed patterns of coverage that reflected each of the historically dominant frames with the greatest usage falling under the *degraded Indian* and the *good Indian*. Between the *Oregonian* and the *New York Times*, the topics of Alcoholism/Drug Abuse and Poverty received the most media attention in terms of article quantity. A majority of national coverage in the *Times* represented Native Americans in the context of casinos and tribal rights, a pairing that is not surprising as the two topics often went hand-in-hand in the same stories. In terms of article length, however, the *Times* placed greatest emphasis upon issues of Poverty and Alcoholism/Drug Addiction. Thus, at the national level, all four of the most important topics fall under the *degraded Indian* frame, according to Miller and Ross’ (2004) definition which they found in articles covering issues of “economic development, gambling, property rights” (p. 253). Weston (1996) also noted alcohol as a sign of the *degraded Indian* frame, a vice of the White man that made them the objects of pity (p. 11). Poverty was also included as an indicator of the frame, an issue often referenced as a repercussion of alcoholism, in the story sample that invites “pity” from the reader.

In addition to the topics indicative of the *degraded Indian* frame, representation of culture also portrays Native Americans in terms of a doomed people. A majority of the articles for both the *New York Times* and the *Oregonian*, highlight discord between White and Native culture, recalling the “Cowboy and Indian” narrative that has long held society’s imagination. The percent margin was slight for the *Oregonian* with the theme of Culture Clash leading Rebuilding/Preserving by only six percent and Multicultural Cooperation by eight, however, the *Times* had a difference of 13 percent between Culture Clash and Rebuilding/Preserving Culture. Consequently, readers at both the national and regional level understand Native Americans through the *degraded Indian* frame, in both cultural theme and coverage of topic in article number and length.

The *good Indian* was also a common theme throughout many of the articles pertaining to the topics of Ceremonial/Spiritual, Art and the Environment. Berkhofer (1978) and Miller and Ross (2004) identify the antithesis to the *degraded Indian* as one that is in touch with nature, a spiritual and wise Native American that embodies the best aspects
of a culture lost to the advancement of White civilization. Separate, the topics portraying the *good Indian* frame had low average percentages compared to the *degraded Indian* themes for both the *Times* and the *Oregonian*. Yet, when combined the percentage of articles featuring elements of the *good Indian* frame totaled 30 percent of the *Times* coverage and 44 percent of the *Oregonian’s*. Emphasis of the *good* and *degraded Indian* frame, perpetuates the duality of the good vs. bad Native American, in which he is either a noble savage or an uncivilized savage (Berkhofer, 1978; Miller and Ross, 2004, p. 249; Weston, 1996, p. 11; Green, 1993, p. 323).

The *historic relic* frame was also represented in the coverage of both papers, measured through the presence of articles with strong historical or archaeological themes. Though the coverage devoted to the *historic relic* did not reach the amount of the previous two frames, it still appeared in 20 percent of the *Times* published material and 22 percent of the *Oregonian’s*. To determine whether the frame also aligned with Miller and Ross’ findings that many of the articles referred in part to the traditional Thanksgiving narrative, the data was cross-referenced with publication date. Articles printed by the *Times* appeared throughout the year, the highest number being published during the months of December and June. This would, then, suggests that the Thanksgiving theme was not prominent in the publishing decisions of the *New York Times*. However, a majority of the articles with historical themes for the *Oregonian* were published during November first, and October second, which may imply the use of the Thanksgiving narrative in a large portion of the historical stories. This finding would contest Weston’s (1996) assertion that publications closer in proximity to Native populations are less likely to rely on dominant frames (p. 15). Greater reliance upon the *historic relic* frame may also be related to the difference in focus of the two publications and the frequency vs. depth disparity. Because the *New York Times* tends to publish stories that speak to broader issues, with less space and resources devoted to smaller, local stories, the Thanksgiving narrative is less prominent within its stories. On the other hand, the *Oregonian*, with a more concentrated local focus, has the opportunity to produce shorter, more frequent pieces on Native Americans as they relate to the traditional Thanksgiving story.

The danger in relying upon the *historic relic* narrative is in the potential to relegate the contemporary Native American to past stereotypical representations. They lose all dimensionality of true culture, as they become symbolic icons of a bygone era. The effect is to make obsolete an entire population in the modern world (Miller and Ross, p. 250). Compounding this effect is the lack of tribal specificity and Native voiced presence in historically themed articles. Though a majority of the articles did specify tribe, a large portion did not include the Native voice through direct quotes. The articles for both the *Times* and *Oregonian* fell at either end of the voiced presence spectrum, with a majority containing 5+ quotes, and the second highest number of stories containing 0 quotes. Without the current perspective provided by present Native American voices, readers are more likely to maintain the static image of past representations in their mind.
The *generic Indian* frame was found most prominent in the percentage of quotes for all topics measured throughout the eight-year sample period, though less so in representation of featured Native individuals and specified tribal affiliation. Articles from the *Times* appears to be more inclusive of the Native voice throughout 2005-2012, as the highest percentages alternated from 1-2, 3-4, or 5+ quotes. The percentage of 0 quotes remained consistently low, never reaching higher than 25 percent in 2008. The *Oregonian*’s stories appear to be less inclusive of the individual Native voice as a large percentage of stories from 2005-2008 and 2011, neglect to include any quotes. During the remaining years the leading percentages varied between 1-2 and 5+ quotes.

The presence of direct quotes from Native Americans is a function of the journalistic routines which dominate the newsroom and individual journalist’s decisions, with ultimate control resting with the “elite” who choose how quotes are used and in what context (Weston, p. 163; Miller and Ross, p. 247; Gamson et al., p. 374). By silencing the individual voices of a minority group and homogenizing otherwise distinguishing cultural traits, we symbolically annihilate the population in the minds of the rest of society. The fact that a majority of the articles distinguished tribal differences from the idea of the Indian as one homogeneous group and the frequency with which individual Native Americans were featured in articles points to a greater effort made on the part of the two papers, nationally and regionally, to rely less upon the *generic Indian* frame. This trend is also found in the identification of tribal background when quoting individuals in the story.

This research was also particularly concerned with the coverage of Native American health issues. Taken as a whole, the topic of Health held one of the highest percentages of total articles present in the study. The numbers, however, a tempered by the fact that a majority of the articles focused primarily upon issues of alcoholism and drug abuse, a topic that also was used in the coding of the *degraded Indian* frame. Journalists must take care in the coverage of such a sensitive, and easily misconstrued topic. It is an important subject to cover, but too much of an emphasis, as with any of the themes, could portray Native Americans as one-dimensional within the frame of that particular vice.

In addition to the topics indicating one of the four frames, this study also recorded data for the topics found in the sample that were not part of the historically dominant themes. This included education, sports, health (not including alcoholism and drug abuse), and business not pertaining to casinos. Separate, each made up a very small percent of the total number of stories, leaving much room for further reporting on issues that would contribute to a more balanced portrayal of the minority group. When the sum of their percentages was totaled, the amount did outweigh the percentage of the *historic relic* frame in both papers as well as the *good Indian* total in the New York Times. This suggests that while the *historic relic* continues to be a frame used for this particular national paper, its presence may be somewhat moderated amidst the total articles published as more stories of a humanizing nature are reported on.

**Conclusions**
This research suggests that both the New York Times and the Oregonian, the former with national readership and the latter with primarily regional, employ each of the four dominant historic frames identified by Berkhofer (1978) and expanded upon later by Miller and Ross (2004). The research of Miller and Ross formed the baseline from which this study was conducted, using their descriptions of the common topics of the frames to elucidate which themes were most covered based upon the most prevalent storylines. It found that among the 212 New York Times articles and the 378 Oregonian articles the most prominent theme was the degraded Indian frame, followed by the good Indian and finally the historic relic. The generic Indian frame was not coded by subject, but instead relied upon certain factors within the stories such as featured Native American subjects, distinguishing between specific tribe and Native Americans as a single cultural group, and number of direct quotes within the article. The study found this last frame to be only present in the number of quotes used in the stories, especially for the Oregonian, which had a large percentage of stories that did not include any quotes.

Based upon these findings the study supports Weston’s (1996) suggestion that historical frames continue to pervade modern-day consciousness, affecting journalistic routines and public perceptions which can lead to stereotyping of minorities by the general public. While stereotypes are not as blatant as they once were, they now appear in subtle frames through which complex issues are narrated. The study found that obvious stereotypical words were used only in the context of stories on name disputes, in which the recognized stereotypes were the purpose of the article. Moreover, the parallels of coverage between the two papers also suggest that journalistic routines follow similar patterns at both papers, despite differences in size and national vs. regional focus.

There is considerable room for improvement in the total amount and type of coverage devoted to Native American issues. The New York Times and the Oregonian both publish hundreds of articles a day, yet 790 is the total number of articles between the two publications that focus primarily on American Indian Issues over eight years. Furthermore, within that number, the largest percent of reporting is framed through topics of the degraded Indian and good Indian making such issues most salient in reader minds. Thus, despite improvements, particularly in featured subjects and recognition of tribal differences, the Oregonian and the Times continue to marginalize and misconstrue.

As with any research this study contended with limitations. For example, this study cannot be generalized beyond the two newspapers or the specific minority group it took into account. Instead it is meant to provide rich descriptive data and will be most useful by providing a basis for future research on Native Americans and framing in the media. It also stops its analysis of the framing cycle at the reader and cannot tell if such themes do in fact have an impact on the public. The study merely provides an understanding of the patterns of coverage that suggest the use of certain frames. And, though the qualitative thematic analysis allowed for the flexibility required to interpret the presence of frames and draw conclusions based on the data the field would benefit
from further work in the form of quantitative textual analysis, to assess how these frames are manifested within the article. This would advance our understanding of the relationship between frames and deadlines, form, content and style. This study also, cannot determine how decisions were made in the choice and framing of stories, and as such, can benefit from additional qualitative interviews from editors and reporters. Finally, future research should take into account visual framing by including the presence of photographs, which can be taken into consideration when evaluating frames in the media. Content analyses of photographs would be descriptive of frames in Native American imagery, and would be especially informative when considered with the stories they accompany.

Figure 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Percentages of Dominant Historical Frames</th>
<th>New York Times</th>
<th>Oregonian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Framed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degraded Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>20.77%</td>
<td>27.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>23.19%</td>
<td>28.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>16.91%</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Report</td>
<td>97.00%</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime/Legal</td>
<td>31.88%</td>
<td>7.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Rights</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism Drug Abuse</td>
<td>9.66%</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>234.19%</strong></td>
<td><strong>103.18%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/Awards</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>13.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual/Ceremonial</td>
<td>12.56%</td>
<td>18.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental/Conservancy</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>13.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.37%</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.50%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Relic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Archaeological</td>
<td>19.81%</td>
<td>22.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.81%</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.75%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanizing Topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Other</td>
<td>14.01%</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (not including Alcoholism/Drug Abuse)</td>
<td>20.77%</td>
<td>11.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>10.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.20%</strong></td>
<td><strong>36.51%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stereotypes</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.38%</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.29%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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