ABSTRACT

USING AND CHANGING A COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC PROGRAM’S NATIVE AMERICAN TEAM NICKNAME: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF ALUMNI COHORTS

by Jessica M. Toglia

The purpose of this study was to investigate the question “How do Miami University alumni perceive and experience the removal of a Native American team nickname from the University's athletic program?” Fourteen semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with alumni from Miami University, each of who represented one of three cohorts relative to the year (1997) the team nickname was changed – that is, who were students either before (graduated by 1993), during (graduated during the years 1993-2000), or after the change (graduated post-2000). Three main themes were identified across all cohorts. The three themes were: It’s P.C., It’s Invention, and Erasing Tradition. Cohort specific themes also emerged.
USING AND CHANGING A COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC PROGRAM’S NATIVE AMERICAN TEAM NICKNAME: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF ALUMNI COHORTS

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Using and Changing a Collegiate Athletic Program’s Native American Team Nickname: Perceptions and Experiences of Alumni Cohorts

Chapter One
Introduction

Many North American sports fans and spectators seem to tolerate the use of Native American imagery including logos, team nicknames, symbols and mascots. Despite fairly widespread acceptance, since the 1970’s debate has been on-going about the appropriateness of the unremitting use of these logos, team nicknames, symbols and mascots at various sporting levels. The debate is centered upon whether names such as Indians, Warriors, Braves, and Redskins and accompanying images are a positive way to honor Native Americans or if they represent harmful, negative stereotypes (Fryberg et al., 2008). For example, in 1995, the Cleveland Indians presented a press-release extolling the historical significance of the franchise name. They assert they are honoring Louis Sockalexis, who they claim was the first Native American to play professional baseball. The name "Indians," they say, is a way to continually remember his contribution to the franchise—to honor his legacy (Staurowsky, 1998). Contrarily, Ward Churchill (1994) argues the use of Native American imagery "causes real pain and real suffering to real people. . . it threatens our very survival . . . it is a crime against humanity" (p. 82).

Sometimes, discussions about "Native American mascots" center on non-natives dressing up as Native Americans. However, physical embodiments of Native Americans used by sports teams are only one part of a complex package of misappropriated Native American identity. There are also inanimate objects such as logos and symbols. Often these are referred to as mascots as well. Thus, it is important to demarcate these terms.

*Names, logos and mascots: A distinction*

Native American symbols are ubiquitous in American sports, especially among college or university and secondary school teams. For example, in 2001 there were 70 colleges and 1,400 high schools that still used Native American imagery for athletics (Staurowsky, 2004). However, a more recent study found that in 2006 a total of 2,963 elementary, middle, and high schools, still retained Native American sport mascots. In that same year, the number of colleges that still used Native American images for their sport teams dropped to 58 (Bresnahan &
Flowers, 2008). These symbols are also present among the four United States men’s professional sports leagues with a total of five teams utilizing some form of Native American imagery. This includes team names such as the Atlanta Braves and Cleveland Indians in Major League Baseball (MLB); the Kansas City Chiefs and the Washington Redskins in the National Football League (NFL); and the Chicago Blackhawks of the National Hockey League (NHL). In addition, all of these elite teams have Native American logotypes or logos that refer to a symbol, representation or abbreviation for, in this case, a sports team. These logos include Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians—the grinning, red-faced, buck-toothed character with a feather in his hat; Atlanta Brave's tomahawk; Kansas City's arrowhead; Washington Redskins' s red-faced, feathered, disembodied character; and the Blackhawks' feathered, war-painted face.

In contrast to a logo, a mascot is a person dressed up as a character for the team. For instance, the Cleveland Indians have Slider "a fuzzy, fuchsia-colored mascot" (“Slider, tribe mascot,” 2009), the Kansas City Chiefs have a wolf that makes appearances at games and the Chicago Blackhawks have a bird named “Tommy Hawk.” These mascots wear the Native American logos of the teams on their costumes and uniforms although they do not have people who actually dress up as a Native American. The Atlanta Braves and Washington Redskins currently do not have mascots, although Atlanta used to have a mascot called Chief Noc-a-Homa (Rosenstein, 2001). It should be noted that many writers fail to distinguish between names, logos, and mascots in their work, sometimes using the terms synonymously. For example, in discussing the significance of Cleveland Indian’s Chief Wahoo, King (2004b) states,

This is not an Indian either. It is Chief Wahoo. This is the pseudo-Indian mascot selected by "The Tribe"—or as they are more properly and commonly known, the Cleveland Indians baseball team—to represent itself and purportedly to honor former player, Louis Sockalexis . . . This is the anti-Indian symbol emblazoned on caps, jerseys and jackets worn by fans, found in the media coverage about the team and populating the publicity materials produced by Major League Baseball, Inc. and its corporate partners. Although not an Indian, Chief Wahoo adorns Indian bodies and makes regular appearances in Indian country (p. 4).

In the above statement, King makes reference to Chief Wahoo first as a mascot and later as a symbol. Chief Wahoo is a logo or a representation of the Cleveland Indians (a symbol). However, since he is not an animate object, he is not a mascot. The distinctions among names, mascots, logos and symbols are important ones because although public discussions are
popularly referred to as debates surrounding Native American mascots, the meanings that logos, team nicknames, and symbols have are much deeper than simply employing a mascot (as suggested by the work of Davis-Delano, 2007, who discussed nicknames, logos and mascots as interrelated phenomena). Throughout the current thesis project team names, logos (or symbols) and mascots are thought of as a “bundle” and are referred to as *Native American imagery*. This is a more encompassing definition because the debate appears to not only include performances by physical mascots but also the meaning that names, symbols/logos and objects can have.

There are competing views about the presence of Native American images as well as different perspectives regarding what they really reveal about our society. This thesis will take a critical look at the use of Native American imagery in sport. Although not the primary topic of this project, there are many arguments used by supporters to defend the continued existence of Native American imagery.

**The case for Native American Imagery**

The use of Native American imagery has been supported and endorsed by some entities, including college administrations, secondary schools, fans and professional sport teams; this can be seen by the continued depictions in sport settings. Defenders argue that these images are not meant to offend anyone, they are actually meant to honor Native Americans. Put another way, supporters believe these images honor Native Americans because the aggressiveness that is associated with sport is thought to be a good thing when linking it to Native Americans as brave warriors (Davis, 1993). Moreover, supporters claim the mascots represent the fun associated with sport. Many people, they would argue, have become too sensitive to the presence of Native American images and representations (King, 2002). That is, there is too much “political correctness”—too much concern about the feelings of non-white groups who claim they are marginalized. Some may see political correctness as a loss of their privilege—their ability to engage in diversionary practices (e.g., sports viewership) without worrying about what people are called or how they are imagined. Another argument that supporters use is that there are some Native Americans who do not object to the use of their likeness for athletic teams. This concept is discussed at length below when describing the *Sports Illustrated* poll that suggested evidence of this idea and the response by scholars. Defenders often state that while teams may have logos and team names that use Native American imagery they also support, often financially, Native
Americans. For example, the Kansas City Chiefs organization stated that the sales of a team poster with players wearing Native American attire were sent to the American Indian Center as a donation (Davis, 1993). Despite the existence of arguments in support of the use of Native American imagery, there have been many cases when a mascot, or logo, team nickname has been removed.

Struggle for Removal

There are many different Native American athletic team nicknames that are utilized currently. This project focuses on the use of the term “Redskin” specifically. According to Allen (1990) slur names began appearing in American English when British settlers encountered Native Americans in colonial times and the earliest known written instance of the Redskin was in 1699. The term “Redskins” originated during a grim period in the United States —during the 1600’s and 1700’s—when Native American bounty hunting was rampant. In colonial America, the British Crown paid bounty hunters for capturing any Native American dead or alive; this could be men, women or children (Cummings, 1999). The pay was usually less than a dollar. Bounty hunters would usually deliver dead Native Americans to the market where commerce took place. The hunters found it difficult to transport whole bodies in their wagons to the collectors and the payers did not want to dispose of them either. Thus, evidence of killing a Native American could be proven by presenting their bloody “red skins” and scalps in order to be paid (Harjo, 2001). In all likelihood, teams that use this nickname do not consider the term's etymology.

The Washington Redskins are perhaps the most well-known professional sports team to use a Native American moniker; however some colleges and universities and secondary school teams have also used the same nickname for their athletic teams. For example, Miami University, a Midwestern public educational institution, located in Oxford, Ohio, used the term "Redskins" for their sports teams from 1928 until 1997. Amidst much disagreement, public discourse, and institutional debate, the name was changed to “RedHawks” in 1997 (Connolly, 2000). While the university community may have felt they were honoring Native Americans who once inhabited the land that the university was built upon (the Miami Tribe has subsequently been moved to Oklahoma where the federally recognized tribe now lives), many find this nickname to be especially offensive (Baca, 2004). The specific event that occurred at
the main campus (the regional campuses were not included in this study) is the focal topic of this thesis and a more detailed account of the event will be discussed below. The purpose of the current study was to explore Miami University alumni attitudes of the elimination of the team nickname “Redskins” from university’s athletic program. The literature surrounding this topic will be reviewed next.
This literature review begins with a brief history of Native American and European American relations. Federal policy regarding Native Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provides the historical context needed to fully understand the controversy that surrounds Native American imagery. A discussion about the origins of Native American imagery in sport follows. Then an examination of the public controversy and why Native American team nicknames and logos persist is presented. In this context, the idea of white privilege is explored. Next, policies and laws concerning the use of Native American imagery are reviewed. Central to the issue of the use of Native American imagery in sport is how racism has become institutionalized and a racially hostile environment may be created. The controversy over the use of Native American imagery in sport is complicated by the intersection of race and gender and this is explored further. Also the discussion of acceptability will be examined (Bresnahan & Flowers, 2008). Limitations of previous opinion research about Native American imagery are then summarized and the issue of self-representation is presented. Finally, research on ways to successfully eliminate Native American imagery in sport is discussed.

A Brief History of Native American and European American Relations

Misinformation regarding Native Americans began with the "discovery of the new world," where upon reaching Haiti, Christopher Columbus mistakenly thought he had landed in India. He later called the Native peoples he came into contact with “Indians” (Wilkens, 2007). This misnomer continues today. Wilkins (2007) states that “Indian,” despite being one of the most common monikers applied to indigenous people in the United States, is also the most problematic due to its geographic inaccuracy and oversimplification of the diverse and distinct cultures of Native Americans. Naming is sometimes the result of power which is evident when Columbus and other Europeans conquered Native Americans and re-named them. Throughout the history of the North American continent, relations between Native Americans and European Americans have been tenuous. Native American relations with the United States government have also been characterized by empty promises. According to Williams (2006), many treaties were drawn between European Americans and tribes of Native Americans but most of these treaties were broken by the U.S. government and the paucity of land now belonging to Native
Americans is evident. For example, in the present day, Native Americans possess approximately 2.5 percent of the land they had prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus. If all existing treaties were upheld, they would control about 35 percent of the land in the United States (Williams, 2006).

Conflict between the United States federal government and Native Americans rose from colonialism—the “want” of expansion and the doctrine of “discovery” where the U.S. declared they had legal title to Native land. When met with opposition, the federal government’s solution was to forcibly remove Native Americans from their land and push them westward (Wilkins, 2007). Out of this conflict, the first organization focusing on relations between Native American and white settlers' was formed in 1824—the United States Office of Indian Affairs (OIA). Creation of the OIA resulted from the idea that an official office was needed to deal with matters concerning the Native American population. During the nineteenth century, European settlers continued to move further west, exploring and adding “new land” to their holdings. According to King & Springwood (2001) these invaders were spurred by the concept of Manifest Destiny—the belief that the westward expansion of the United States was ordained by God. Based in Puritan theology, the main idea was that divine prophecy gave white European settlers the right to conquer and “liberate” any people who were different from them in the “New World”; that is, it was believed that Europeans’ destiny was to control the North American continent. Some Europeans who settled in America believed themselves to be God’s chosen people and as such, they were able to justify the bloody genocide or sacrifice of Native American lives that resulted from their conquest (King & Springwood, 2001).

Eventually the frontier began to dissipate as European settlers had explored most of the land that was to become the United States. Thus, instead of the violent removal that characterized early policy regarding Native Americans, reformers sought to blend them into the mainstream. During the late nineteenth century, in an attempt to avoid further conflict, the United States government employed a plan to “civilize” the Native peoples of the land. Instead of extinction, the focus shifted to the idea of educating Native Americans and forcing them to adopt “white” culture. The idea of educating Native Americans was not new to this era; for example in 1775 the “Civilization Fund” was established in New York with $10,000 dollars put towards their education. However, during the decade of the 1870’s the federal government made
a larger commitment to the idea. Between 1877—the year the government officially began annual appropriations of federal dollars—and 1900, the number of Indian schools increased from 150 to 296 (Lindsey, 1995). Many of these schools were "boarding schools"—that is, rather than "educating" Indians on reservations, they were sent to these schools that were based on the missionary model to be completely immersed in “white” culture away from their families and traditional Native customs. The federal government’s role in the boarding school program was part of a larger scheme to force Native Americans to assimilate. The goal was mass cultural conversion under the guise of education. “The Indian problem” was viewed as another “white man’s burden” (Bloom, 2000). The initial thinking of the time period and European Americans’ hope was that within a few generations, a distinct Native American culture would cease to exist. However, there were competing ideologies that directed the management of the schools. Some administrators truly believed they were helping Native Americans by assimilating them, educating them in the dominant “white” culture, and forcing enculturation, while others truly thought that Native Americans were racially inferior and it was their duty to civilize them (Bloom, 2000).

By the early twentieth century, the federal government operated twenty-five boarding schools. One of the most prominent boarding schools of the time period was the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Here sport was used as a tool to “Americanize” and assimilate Native Americans into the dominant culture (Bloom, 2000). Thus, the connection between sport and Native Americans is an old and enduring one. Boarding schools, intent on "Americanizing" Indians, and their sports programs, cease to exist. However, the connection between Native Americans and sports continues in the form of Native American imagery used for athletics; many fans who otherwise have had no contact with the Native American population are aware of these symbols even if they are unaware of the origins of these symbols.

**Origins of Native American Imagery in Sport**

The use of mascots by schools and colleges coincided with the expansion of athletics beginning in the early 1920s. Before to the 1920s, college athletics were less established than today and there was less regulation of teams and players. For example, a student could play for several college teams over the course of a career with no limit on the number of years of athletic eligibility. For example, William Lewis played football as an undergraduate for Amherst and
then later, he went to Harvard for law school and joined the Harvard football team (Rust, 1985). These athletes became known as “tramp athletes” (Smith, 1988, p. 139). Prior to this time period, there is little evidence of Native American mascots and team nicknames (Davis, 1993). This would change with the expansion of intercollegiate athletics. At schools where college athletics were expanding, the popular collegiate athletic team nicknames were first based on school colors. For example, Dartmouth College’s nickname was the “Big Green” and Miami University’s nickname was “The Big Reds” (Connolly, 2000; “The ‘Big Green’ Nickname”, 2010). As athletics gained a permanent place at schools and universities they also gained legitimacy. It was during this period—the early 20th Century—that schools like Dartmouth University (Indians), Stanford University (Indians), the University of Illinois (Fighting Illini), and Miami University (Redskins) began to use Native American mascots. In fact, many schools and colleges that adopted Native American names/mascots did so during this period even though they may have had prior nicknames (Connolly, 2000). These mascots were invented from stereotypes such as those shown in the very popular Wild West shows and movies that depicted Native Americans as savages but also as, athletic, trustworthy and noble (Connelly, 2000). Stereotypes continued with the advent of television. For example, The Lone Ranger, a top-rated television show during the late 1940s and the 1950s had a sidekick, Tonto who exhibited the kinds of traits that many Americans would admire in an assimilated Native American—he was bold and fearless—and exhibited the qualities of a “good Indians” (Spindel, 2000).

King (2006) explains, during the time period of the invention and adoption of Native American athletic team nicknames in the early 20th century, there was a crisis in white masculinity due to the closing of the frontier. The land that was considered “The United States” had been almost fully explored by European “settlers.” This movement of European settlers as far west as possible deprived men of what had been an important means for displaying masculinity. Moreover, the rise of urbanization and industrialization contributed to the crisis (King, 2008). According to Messner (1988) during this time period while industrial capitalism was expanding, traditional forms of male domination were being undermined. For example, urbanization was accompanied by the loss of farms which diminished the practice of passing down private property, an important feature in men’s domination of a central occupation—farming. Thus, fewer men controlled their own labor. This created fears of the “feminization of
society” (Messner, 1988, p. 200) due to more women entering the workforce, especially public schools, and men having to rely on different breadwinner roles — roles that were less tied to property ownership. Thus, men during this time period were seeking alternative ways to validate their masculinity and reclaim authority over women. Organized sport was a major outlet that provided men ways to demonstrate superiority over women and combat perceived notions about feminization. That is, athletics were not viewed as being compatible with femininity; moreover, women rarely used athletics as a site for the struggle for equal opportunity (for many women, this would come much later).

At the same time of this crisis in masculinity, intercollegiate athletics were expanding. During this expansion, as most intercollegiate teams selected new names, there seemed to be a reliance on “masculine” characteristics such as toughness and physicality. For many athletic programs this was best illustrated by traits such as bravery, stamina, and some warrior-like qualities — traits that had come to be associated with Native Americans, at least the “good Indians,” (Spindel, 2000). Thus, Native American mascots and team nicknames grew out of the same stereotypes of the time period that the Wild West shows used: fierce fighters, warlike, and brave. These stereotypes helped to consistently present male sports, especially sports like football, as uber-masculine, and these sports may have helped to replace the frontier as an outlet for men to demonstrate and validate masculinity. Although, the crisis of white masculinity did not directly produce Native American team nicknames and symbols, and these names were perhaps not chosen consciously to respond to the crisis, the environment was conducive to their adoption. The increased use of Native American imagery in college athletics occurred simultaneously with this crisis of masculinity. Similarly, Davis (1993) argues Native American images are sustained because supporters of this imagery feel arguments against them challenge a “common version of European-American masculine identity” (p. 16). That is, within western mythology pride and nationalism are present. For those supporters, the removal of these images would be un-American. That is to say, since the closing of the “real” frontier—the end of the westward expansion which provided a means for the development of masculinity—sport has served as a surrogate frontier, allowing participants to continue the battle for supremacy. This is congruent with King’s (2008) arguments regarding the crisis in masculinity. Native American mascots have played a role in the masculine identity through sport for many Americans.
King (2008) notes that over the years these mascots “have become institutionalized icons, encrusted with memories, tradition, boosterism, administrative investment, financial rewards, and collective identity” (p. 421). That is, Native American imagery (mascots and symbols) has come to mean more than rallying a team to victory. With the proliferation of Native American team nicknames and symbols throughout the 21st century and changes to college athletic programs, images became abundant. The accompanying language, actions by fans, and imagery led to a controversy about their existence. According to Bresnahan and Flowers (2008) frequent exposure to these images can result in the desensitization and lead to ultimate acceptance of Native American mascots. Thus, seemingly innocuous sport symbols have become part of a larger controversy.

The Public Controversy

As previously stated, this thesis takes a critical look at Native American imagery. The arguments employed by opponents to the use of Native American imagery will be discussed next.

The case against Native American imagery

Detractors state that Native American images are racist and they are detrimental stereotypes based on incorrect information. For example, “warriors” suggest that Native Americans are aggressive and violent and ignores the fact that many Native American practices have been linked to non-violence and cooperation. Misappropriation of sacred symbols such as the eagle feather is another argument that is used by opponents. According to Davis (1993), the eagle feather is a ceremonial item and represents the highest honor a Native American can receive for doing a great deed; it is congruent with receiving the United States’ Congressional Medal of Honor. Therefore, sports fans who sometimes dress in Native costumes using chicken feathers essentially mock this most precious spiritual article with disrespectful and demeaning behavior. Moreover, there are those who display symbols such as war paint, feathers and tomahawks (which they claim honor the brave Native Americans of the past), not acknowledging that these symbols are sacred and should not be used so haphazardly for an athletic contest. Also, in response to the belief that the symbols are meant to honor Native Americans, a reference to the groups’ past, opponents counter that thinking of Native Americans as a people of the past obscures thoughts today about a vibrant living culture. It is problematic, opponents say, to
memorialize a group of people who still exist. The opposition to Native American imagery has produced protests.

The Protests

While protests of Native American mascots in sports at all levels including high school, collegiate and the professional ranks have accelerated, mascots have been controversial for many years. Some have argued that racial sensitivity was heightened in the 1970s following the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s; this included the critique of the use of Native American imagery in sport especially at the professional level. Until then, Native American imagery had been largely ignored. However, in 1970, the first official complaint on record against the use of Native American logos associated with a professional sports team was filed against the Cleveland Indians’ use of the logo of Chief Wahoo. The complaint cited degradation and defamation associated with the image. This cartoon caricature as described earlier with his red face, sly grin and exaggerated facial features such as protruding lips and nose, was seen on merchandise, team uniforms, and in the media. It appears to have resulted in no change in the Cleveland Indians’ practices; they continue to use this logo to this day (Banks, 1993). In 1972, two years after the original complaint, the American Indian Movement’s (AIM) Cleveland, Ohio chapter brought a $9 million dollar lawsuit against the Cleveland Indians baseball team (Fisher, 2001). Also during this time period, AIM and the National Congress of American Indians (NCIA) filed a joint complaint against the Washington Redskins alleging that the team nickname invokes racist connotations. They asked the Redskins to remove both the team name and the logo. As was the case with the Cleveland Indians, they found the team owner to be unwilling to accommodate them.

These early protests received little attention, perhaps owing to the small audience it actually reached. However, activism regarding Native American mascots continued to grow, and by the 1990s—due perhaps to methods of protest such as organized campaigns against their use and new ways to disseminate information such as the internet—these protests began to receive national media attention (Davis, 1993).

According to Miller (1999), the first large-scale demonstration by opponents of Native American imagery against a professional sport team took place in 1991 at the Major League Baseball World Series between the Minnesota Twins and the Atlanta Braves. The protestors'
main concern was the use of “the chop,” employed by Braves fans to rally the team. The chop consists of a simulated "warrior" chant accompanied by a rhythmic hand motion simulating a tomahawk. Protestors took this gesture to be a mockery of their ceremonial rituals. Bill Means, then director of AIM, estimated that 50,000 Native Americans called Minnesota home. Many of them found the Braves fans’ behavior to be offensive. Approximately 800 protestors demonstrated during the first game of the series in Minnesota. The demonstrations were not conflict-free; protestors recalled getting spit on and having beer poured on them by passersby. In addition, there were several arrests of the protestors for confrontations with the Atlanta fans.

A few months later, at the 1992 Super Bowl between the Washington Redskins and the Buffalo Bills, also in Minnesota, there was another large scale protest. Here, protestors objected to the team names, the “Redskins” which they found to be offensive, and the “Bills” which some Native Americans associate with "Buffalo Bill Cody" and other American cowboys who represent unfriendly relations with Native Americans. Approximately 2,000 protestors marched around the stadium during the pre-game activities and demonstrated during the game holding signs with phrases such as “We Are Not Mascots” and “Repeal Redskin Racism” among others. Protestors here hoped to ride on the coattails of the first large scale demonstration that occurred in Minnesota to continue media exposure (Miller, 1999). Also according to Miller (1999), there were demonstrations at the 1995 World Series played between the Atlanta Braves and the Cleveland Indians, a series that was dubbed the “World Series of Racism.” Unlike the previous protested games, in this game both teams used Native American imagery. Protesters used picket signs and debated ticket holders, as in the past. However, their practices escalated as they now dressed in costumes depicting, for example the Pope, a nun, and a Jewish caricature of the Indian’s owner, Richard Jacobs, to demonstrate the inappropriateness of teams’ and fans’ use of Native American mascots and symbols. They hoped to offend fans by using “sacred symbols” just as they were offended by fans’ display and use of feathers and headdresses that have religious meaning to Native Americans. Protesters were trying to demonstrate the dehumanization that occurs when sport organizations use Native American imagery, while also challenging the belief that that symbols and logos honor Native Americans. This controversy is not limited to the professional ranks of sport but extends to colleges, universities, and secondary schools.
Institutionalized racism: The case of Chief Illiniwek

At the University of Illinois, the athletic team name mascot Chief Illiniwek first performed at a football game halftime in 1926. This mascot was unchallenged until the 1960s. When other colleges began removing their Native American team names and mascot, UI came under scrutiny as well. The first documented complaint came in 1975 when AIM board member Bonnie Fultz publicly denounced the mascot in the university yearbook. Throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s the controversy received little attention. Beginning in 1989 a student led group at the university raised the issue once again and in 1990 the Board of Trustees voted to retain the mascot with a vote of 7-1. The 1990s and the decade of the 2000s were characterized but debate surrounding the use of Chief Illiniwek with much effort by students and faculty to remove the mascot but the Board of Trustees remained firm (Connolly, 2000).

For some scholars (King & Springwood, 2001; Farnell, 2004; King, 2002) this illustrates the way institutionalized racism persists in colleges and universities. Moreover, according to King (2004b), historical structures and institutional arrangements contribute to the continued use of these pseudo-Indian symbols because educational institutions have reinforced acceptance of these images. In 2007, the University of Illinois retired Chief Illiniwek, their longtime Native American mascot. However, this case is an illustrative example of how a Native American mascot was manifested and maintained in the collegiate setting through the use of institutionalized racism.

King (2002) lays out anti-Indian practices that are used to support Native American imagery (especially those at educational institutions such as the University of Illinois) and he argues that these can be grouped into six categories. The first category is myopia and misrecognition meaning that most Native American mascots are fictional and are often based on stereotypes. For example, at University of Illinois home athletic games, a student, typically a white male, dressed up as “The Chief” and performed a dance for the crowd. This mascot did not represent a “real” Native American because the dance is completely foreign to the Native American population that inhabits Illinois. Also, the costume worn was incorrect because the student wore regalia of the Plains region but the Illinois region is home to woodland people (Farnell, 2004). The second category is possessiveness where schools and colleges usually frame the removal of a mascot or a symbol as an attempt to take away “their Indian.”
example can be seen in the argument that outsiders such as activists do not fully understand traditions if they do not attend that particular school/college. The third category is settling on compromising positions where a tactic that is employed is a democratic look at the situation but often ends with compromise. An example of a compromise is offering to increase money given to Native American student scholarships in exchange for retaining the mascot or symbol. This tactic is a way for the school administration to reject accountability. A forth tactic is endorsement where educational institutions try to secure support from fans, students and alumni in particular to continue the use of the Native American mascot image. During the controversy that ensued over Chief Illiniwek, websites devoted to the retention were created such as www.honorthechief.com. This website is maintained by “Honor the Chief Society” which was formed in 2001, and despite the statement that “the organization is not affiliated with the University of Illinois in any way” (honorthechief.com, p.1) and membership requirements do not include being a student, faculty, or alumni, this organization may be considered an ally to the administration. The fifth category is incorporating support from local Native Americans for retention of a mascot. For example, the Florida State Seminoles point out that a descendent of Chief Osceola supports the version of his ancestors on the athletic field. The sixth and final category is invoking terror where violent actions and words are used to demean the people in opposition of the mascot (King, 2002). A specific example of this occurred when Spokane student Charlene Teters spoke out to the University of Illinois administration against Chief Illiniwek and she was spit on and had trash thrown at her. Similarly, using social movement theory to study the struggle to change a Native American mascot, Davis-Delano and Crosset (2008) found that ideologies used by actors who are opposed to the change were more successful if they used ideologies such as some of the ones listed above (i.e. majority should rule, some Native Americans support the mascot, and the people who are opposed to the change are outsiders that do not know what they are talking about). The public controversy regarding the use of Native American imagery also extends to secondary schools. Two examples of district decisions will be examined next.

The Los Angeles School District (LASD), in response to complaints about schools mascots, formed a task force to examine the ways schools used Native American imagery. In 1997, the Los Angeles American Indian Education Commission (AIEC) argued for the removal
of all mascots. Initially, the LASD offered to remove logos, pictures and other images that the AIEC found offensive, if the schools were allowed to keep their Native American nicknames. However, in the end, all mascots and names were eliminated from LASD (Machamar, 2001). The Minnesota Board of Education made a similar decision about its schools (King, 2002). Despite the controversy that surrounded the removal of Native American imagery at the school board level, it was accomplished without the kinds of demonstrations and protests that met the request to remove logos and team names from professional teams.

*Learning “Indianness,” White Privilege, and Marginalization*

Strong (2004) calls the subordinate and marginalized position—second class citizenship—to which Native Americans have been assigned, the “mascot slot.” This slot keeps them from gaining full participatory citizenship within the United States because they are considered commodities rather than citizens. Furthermore, Strong contends that people who belong to the dominant culture now associate “Indianness” with created mascots and images they see on television and at sporting events. That is, some fail to see Native Americans as complete people; rather, they see them in ways that are consistent with the stereotypical media portrayals that tend to maintain a singular depiction. Native Americans images used as sport logos do not capture the diversity of what it means to be a Native American. Instead, they are often false and exaggerated images such as “pseudo-Indian” sport symbols. These images can then become what Staurowsky (1999) calls “tools for teaching racism” (p. 390). Education can actually reproduce inequality based on what teachers cover in their classrooms; this is especially true of the presentation of inaccurate descriptions of Native American history and culture. In her work, Staurowsky (1999; 2004) demonstrates this misappropriation of Native American culture. Within some Native American culture certain outfits are only to be worn on specific religious days so when young elementary students dress up as Native Americans at any time of the year, this demonstrates general ignorance of religious practices. Also, practices such as construction paper headdresses, which are prevalent throughout elementary schools, make a mockery of a sacred part of some Native American culture and trivializes it, too. That is, this essentially demonstrates that a sacred object can somehow be made as a craft project.

Similar to Straurowsky’s arguments, King (2008) argues that Native American imagery often teaches secondary school students and the public about race, culture and history. School
districts and classrooms are often pedagogical sites for the introduction and perpetuation of these images both in textbooks and in some examples on the athletic field. Students may not, in these schools, learn that Native American mascots that are used in American sports were a white invention intentionally kept in place to maintain white privilege (i.e., unearned advantage due to skin color as defined by McIntosh, 1990) because they receive a watered-down version of the history of power relations between Native Americans and the United States government. White racial superiority is maintained by reiterating the successful conquest of Native Americans, yet, the stereotypical view of the “savage or brave Indian” is a central part in the story told in textbooks and taught in classrooms (Staurowsky, 2004). It is this warrior image that teams celebrate; it is these virtues that come to be associated with successful sports teams and it is these skills—the brave and the unrelenting—that athletic participants try to emulate. Stereotypical images of feathers and tomahawks may come to mind for some people. This results in what Staurowsky (1999) calls the absence of cultural literacy—or the absence of an understanding of different cultures—which contributes to the perpetuation of Native American imagery. To become literate in cultures is to learn how individuals and groups have both shared and different experiences within our society. However, the choice of which cultures receive attention in schools is a reflection of who has power within our society. An ethnocentric view in which European heritage is taught and is central in schools usually results in the failure to account for Native Americans. Instead, images that are created are false renderings of Native American culture and are reinvented for the consumption by a predominantly white audience (King, 2008). Instead of learning the different cultures of Native Americans—cultures that are not homogenous but still have a rich history—students are confronted with stereotypical images and artificial histories that have been devised. A particular set of images continue to be perpetuated, thus some classrooms are sites where white privilege is strengthened and sustained by internalization of the fiction that students are faced with (Staurowsky, 1999; 2004). Native American groups have called for more accurate and historically grounded meanings of their culture to be taught. Despite these attempts, in some schools, the use of these symbols has become an everyday practice; most people have little understanding of real contributions that Native Americans have made to the larger society due the stereotypical images that dominate.
Historically, marginalized groups within the United States have faced blatant discriminatory practices such as the stereotypical depiction of the *black rapist* and Latinos’ struggles with the stereotype of the *illegal immigrant* (Stewart et al., 2011). African Americans and Latinos, to name two groups, continue to face ethnic and racial inequality in many areas. Yet, while some of the most pernicious racial images such as the Frito Bandito, the logo depicting a Mexican used for Frito Corn Chips, and the Little Black Sambo, a character used in children’s books, which were once very common, have now all but disappeared from the media, pernicious depictions of Native Americans used for mascots and logos persist (Baca, 2004). This continued use of Native American imagery illustrates what Farnell describes as occupying “different spaces.” Farnell (2004) argues that Native Americans occupy a different space than other minorities. For her, there seems to be a difference when it comes to Native American images versus images of other groups. By this she means that while certain, but certainly not all, of the derogatory representations of other marginalized groups have been removed, Native American representations used for sport imagery continue and are widespread. Moreover, these Native American images are racializing, that is, they involve mimicking a group, and posing that group as an "other." Farnell (2004) argues this is done, despite resistance from the group that is objectified. Primarily, those who support Native American images belong to the dominant racial group—they occupy a white public space, where the normal is white and nonwhites are marginalized and demeaned. In contrast, King (2004a) states that racial analogy has hurt the efforts to remove Native American imagery. That is, the practice of comparisons between the experiences of Native Americans and other groups is not a successful practice. Instead of creating hypothetical situations (i.e. would a team called the Cleveland Niggers ever exist?) that are supposed to make the person pause and examine the racial connotations of supposedly equitable words used for Native Americans, King argues that this reproduces common stereotypes and relies on racialized language. Thus, he questions it as a useful tactic.

Some research has examined the psychological effects of mascots and media images of Native Americans on Native American students. Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman and Stone (2008) conducted four studies done in different Native American high schools and on one college campus. Participants were shown images such as Chief Wahoo, Chief Illiniwek, Pocahontas, and or other common American Indian images. They found that although some of these images
had positive associations (such as peacefulness) among Native American students, other images demonstrated negative psychological consequences such as lowered self-esteem and they lessened perceptions of community worth, and diminished aspirations—what Native American students viewed as possible (Fryberg et al., 2008). Native American imagery is pervasive in American sports. But, why do these images of Native Americans persist? What forces sustain them? Scholars put forth different reasons to explain why these images are maintained.

**Maintenance of Images**

Approximately 1,500 mascots at all sporting levels have been removed or changed since the first protests began in the 1970’s (King, 2002). However, enduring images at all sporting levels including high school, college and professional, demonstrates that they are maintained for various reasons. According to Slowikowski (1993) these mascots are maintained because they have become part of the physical culture and are now normalized in spite of the fact that these present day mascots are re-creations of a past that never was. Also, perpetuation of images is linked to the prevalence of these mascots where authenticity is usually granted but is unwarranted. The concept of masculinity is central to the controversy that surrounds Native American imagery. In contrast, prominent long-time leader in the American Indian Movement, Banks (1993) argues the maintenance of the images is a much more acute problem than simply an attack on masculinity. Rather it is deeply rooted racism that is bred via sport with the mocking of Native American culture that takes place on athletic fields.

For Bresnahan and Flowers (2008) mascots are maintained for different reasons. They note that “Indian sport mascots embody complex bundles of messages about race, power, gender, history, heritage, identity, and sovereignty transmitted though allied media” (p. 166). The researchers examined the effect of sport involvement on the acceptance of Native American images by relying on cultivation theory, which suggests that there are two effects of perceptions that continuous exposure to media images can have: exposure can lead people to become more sensitized to an image which results in ultimate rejection, or it can lead to de-sensitization because frequency leads to ultimate acceptance of these images. They found more involvement in sports was associated with higher levels of acceptance of Native American mascots (as the authors have defined them). Sports fans appear to be influenced by the imagery they see and greater involvement in sport leads to embracing images such Native American mascots.
uncritically. This has implications for those who make decisions about images as they tend to have high sport involvement which appears to be linked to higher acceptance of mascots. Thus, for both Banks (1993) and Bresnahan & Flowers (2008), Native American imagery has much deeper meanings than just being a mascot for a sports team. It is not primarily about masculinity; rather, it transmits culturally accepted messages about a group’s history, including conflict and conquest, and stereotypes. That is, the historical relations between Native Americans and European Americans are based upon the warrior images that so often appear in the history of Native Americans as a group.

While sport mascots are constructed around images of race, they are also gendered constructions. Although a lot of attention has been given to race and masculinity on this topic, gender has been largely left out—few scholars discuss ways in which Native American images can be sexist. We now turn to a discussion of the connection between Native American imagery and gender.

A Closer Look at Gender

Sport is defined as male activity (Bryson, 1987); for example, it often requires violence—a trait typically associated with men. Practices such as the trivialization of women’s accomplishments in sport and gendered naming of teams contribute to the notion that sport is by definition masculine. By presenting sport as masculine and violent, males are subsequently defined as superior to women, especially through the lens of replays of violent collisions of the male only National Football League (NFL). Sport is viewed as lacking the qualities of traditional femininity and is thus a masculine arena. According to King (2006), not only are images of Native Americans as sport mascots stereotypical and racist, but they also reinforce hegemonic masculinity—the dominant form and cultural ideal of masculinity. However, gender has been somewhat ignored in the discussions about mascots as these discussions tend to focus primarily on race. The “Fighting Sioux” of the University of North Dakota is a “raced” figure—a brown-skinned man with dark hair and feathers. Like other mascots, the Fighting Sioux is male. Furthermore, “fighting” suggests behavior that is thought to be more appropriate for men than for women. Thus, these mascots are associated with masculinity in our culture (Williams, 2006).
While the mascots are male, racist, and offensive, depictions of women via Native American imagery does exist. T-shirts that mock opponents, particularly between teams that meet often and have developed rivalries, offer cogent examples. A t-shirt worn by students on the North Dakota State University (NDSU) campus showed a female Native American with protruding lips that read ‘A Century of Sucking 1890-1990’ (referring to the University of North Dakota, or UND). This message has a dual meaning. At first glance it may mean that NDSU students believe that UND athletics have performed poorly for a century—“they suck.” A closer examination, however, reveals the t-shirts’ offensive sexual overtones. It suggests this is a Native American woman who has engaged, or will engage, in the act of fellatio, a message that is rooted in the stereotype of women of color as sexually permissive and submissive. In their use of a racist mascot image and “underlying” sexual tones, these t-shirts represent patriarchal domination (Williams, 2006). Thus women are not entirely absent from these kinds of sporting practices. Rather, they, too, are victims of sexist oppression through a system of entrenched patriarchy.

Williams (2006) says there are four practices that sustain patriarchy and contribute to sexist oppression at UND that could also extend to other universities. The first is the “old boys club” notion in sport. To illustrate, in 2000, a letter was drafted that protested the logo and name and stated that UND failed to respect the request of regional tribes. It went on to officially ask that the name be changed. This letter was signed by 21 Native-related programs at the University of North Dakota. Despite the letter coming from a concerned population, the administration, which at UND is largely composed of white males, did not honor their request. Thus, the predominately male decision-makers upheld the notion of the “old boys club.”

The second factor is the ‘Father knows best syndrome’ which is dominant in a patriarchal society. In a letter to the President of UND, wealthy donor and collector of Nazi memorabilia Ralph Engelstad threatened to discontinue his donations if the “Fighting Sioux” name was changed. Engelstad had previously given $100 million to build the UND hockey arena and because of his significant financial contributions and his clout with the university, he was the father figure who “knows best.” Engelstad also has publicly denounced a female professor who opposed the name saying he would fire her if he had the capability.
Objectification is the third factor and this is the process of a person being treated as an inanimate object. Native Americans have become objectified when they are “turned into” mascots. The symbol and Fighting Sioux name have been used on commodities such as sweatshirts and sweatpants, which according to Williams (2006) indicates they are objects to be enjoyed by consumers.

The use of other disparaging labels such as “liberal women” is the fourth practice that both sustains patriarchy and contributes to sexist oppression. Female professors at the University of North Dakota have been labeled by the supporters of retention of the mascot as “liberal women” who have no business meddling in sport and the issue of Native American mascots and names. These “liberal women” include progressive academics on campus as well as female Native American students, the latter which outnumber Native American male students 2:1. Women at UND often receive demeaning comments when they question the use of mascots. Some of the letters to the editor in the Grand Forks newspaper stated if the women did not like the name “Fighting Sioux” and the related images they should leave. Perhaps this is because letter writers do not accept that women should be involved in decisions about sport, even those involving demeaning acts reflecting racism, sexism and patriarchy. The use of Native American images by educational institutions often relies on racist and sexist images to entertain or humor sports fans. Thus, it contributes to the creation and maintenance of detrimental stereotypes and patriarchal practices. Other factors that impact the debate surrounding Native American mascots are laws and policies. These will be discussed at length next.

Policies, Laws, and Landmark Decisions

The debate regarding Native American imagery in college athletics has grown recently and with no clear resolution, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) formulated a policy regarding these images and their use at member educational institutions. According to Staurowsky (2007) this policy ignited a firestorm of controversy and arguably has caused the most resentment in comparison to other issues dealt with by the NCAA. This shows the contested nature of the use of mascots, although the policy did not satisfy all sides. This policy has not yet been successful in totally eliminating college teams’ Native American symbols which suggests that local activism prior to this policy seems to have removed more mascots. In August of 2005, the NCAA announced that any school with Native American imagery, which includes
both mascots and team nicknames, would be banned from displaying them at sanctioned events and would be ineligible to host NCAA championships. Of the nineteen schools that were affected, five were granted appeals pending permission from local tribes to continue use of their name and or mascot and of this five, the most vocal schools in opposition to this policy were Florida State (FSU Seminoles); University of North Dakota (Fighting Sioux); and University of Illinois (UI Fighting Illini). FSU secured tribal permission and continues to use imagery associated with the Seminole tribe; as of 2009, UND has agreed to drop their mascot by August 2011 unless they were able to secure permission from the one of the two Sioux tribes (Richardson, 2009); and the University of Illinois has retired their mascot.

FSU, UND, Central Michigan University (Chippewas) and the University of Utah (Utes) all employed a similar strategy—seeking support from local tribes to retain names or mascots, to fight efforts to “take away our Indian” (King, 2002). Among critics of this policy, Staurowsky (2007) argues that by having an appeals process in place and allowing some schools to maintain these images, full success has not been achieved; that is, the NCAA’s policy seems to seek middle ground—partially banning mascots but allowing schools that gain the consent of local tribes. These practices appear to run counter to former President Myles Brand’s statement that “The NCAA objects to institutions using racial/ethnic/national origin references in their intercollegiate athletics programs” (Bresnahan & Flowers, 2008, p. 165). Thus, the reactions of those associated with some of the effected schools such as the president of the University of North Dakota threatening to sue on the grounds that membership does not give the NCAA the authority to change their mascot, exemplify white power and privilege (Staurowsky, 2007) — that is, predominantly white administrations are trying to exercise white privilege in order to keep practices favored by the power structure in place, all while trying to preserve those images that they enjoy at the expense of non-whites.

At a judicial level, beyond policies that only affect collegiate institutions that are members of the NCAA, there are two laws that may aid in the removal of all Native American imagery. As defined in the legislation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the creation of a racially hostile environment was originally applied to the workplace but has since been modified to include educational settings where discrimination is prohibited in federally funded programs. This may extend to the use of Native American imagery in all schools and colleges. Regulations
have been put into place stating that “a school may not effectively cause, encourage, accept, tolerate, or fail to correct a racially hostile environment of which it has actual or constructive notice” (Baca, 2004, p. 73). The core requirement for bringing suits under this law is that the Office of Civil Rights has to find the level of pervasiveness of Native American images to be extremely high and it has to reach the level entitled “hostile.” However, since many people have come to accept these images into their everyday lives, it may be hard to prove that these images create an environment that could possibly be labeled as hostile (Baca, 2004). The interpretation of the legal definition of what makes an environment hostile is left to the courts where the effect of these images can be downplayed. Lawsuits filed with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) claiming a racially hostile environment has been created have resulted in rulings favorable to the schools that wish to maintain mascots. For example, in 1994, a group of Native Americans associated with the University Of Illinois filed a complaint with the OCR, claiming that the university’s mascot, Chief Illiniwek, was insulting and offensive. The courts seemed to recognize that the mascot may have contributed to hostility on the campus but claimed that “the incidents of hostility were neither severe enough nor pervasive enough to rise to the level of a hostile environment” (Baca, 2004, p. 75).

Another possible legal route to successful elimination of Native American imagery discussed in the Harvard Law Review (1999) may be to use Title II of the Civil Rights Act which “guarantees all persons the right to the ‘full and equal enjoyment’ of places of public accommodation without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin” (p. 906). Title II prohibits unintentional discrimination meaning within the law it does not have to be proven that the venues were intentionally trying to keep people from enjoying these public spaces. A Title II case could be successful if it can be shown that a significant number of Native Americans avoid certain public spaces, such as stadiums, because they cannot fully enjoy them because of racist images displayed by the teams. The law is not concerned with whether or not the owners and operators of the team are racist but rather whether the mascots are creating a space where there is unequal enjoyment. These images may discourage the full patronage of the people that the mascots caricaturized, thus creating unequal access to the said sport venues. This means that owners cannot use the defense that they are “honoring” Native Americans and have no intention to discriminate against them. Despite the fact that there are no physical barriers that prevent
Native Americans from attending games, the discriminatory environment created seems to be in violation of Title II. Moreover, legal precedents have been set using Title II that may help opponents in their legal challenges to Native American imagery. For example, in the case of *Urban League of Rhode Island v. Sambo’s of Rhode Island, Inc.*, it was found by the Rhode Island Human Rights Commission that restaurants using the name “Sambo” negatively impacted African American patronage and promoted unequal public access. This was in strict violation of the public accommodations law—Title II. It would seem, based on this case, that Native American imagery could provide evidence of deterrence to sport venues (“A Public Accommodations”, 1999). Therefore, Title II may be a more successful route to take than Title VI (racially hostile environments) since at least some precedents have been set regarding progress toward eliminating some negative depictions. However, there continues to be barriers to lawsuits of this kind, in part perhaps, due to the standards that are applied, and whose perspective counts. That is, white control of courts may still be an obstacle that is encountered, since Title II and Title IX could be applied to Native American imagery but have not been successful. According to Staurowsky (2004) the interpretations of laws are value laden and social forces and power relations play a role in legal decisions. The operation of white privilege, especially in the reasonable person standard where white is normal and this is the “standard” that is applied, is evident in the example of the Commission’s position in the case of *McBride v. Motor Vehicle Division of Utah State Tax Commission* where the usage of the word “Redskin” on vanity license plates was decided. The plaintiffs in the case that were challenging its use were two Native American residents. Originally the tax commission decided that the term was not offensive since the word “Redskin” had widespread popularity; thus it was not in violation of Utah’s law codes. Eventually, the Utah Supreme Court reversed the decision and ordered that license plates containing any version of the word “Redskins” be revoked. Staurowsky (2004) pointed out that although the decision was reversed, it is evident that white privilege operates in the use of the reasonable person standard— that is the “objective, “reasonable person” that would not find the term offensive is white. The original decision had “done nothing more than perpetuate the viewpoints and biases of the white male judges applying the standard” (Cummings, 2008, p. 329). Despite the arguments made for the use of federal and state laws in
order to bring about change (Title II and Title VI), these should be used as a cautionary tactic since there is little assurance that fair decisions will be made.

In another landmark case, *Harjo v. Washington Football Club*, the use of the nickname “Redskins” was challenged beginning in 1992. This was a trademark lawsuit brought against the Washington Redskins professional football team resulting in the cancellation of six of their trademarks on “Redskins,” meaning that they would lose exclusive rights and the trademark would not be legally protected. Although the trademark on the term “Redskins” was cancelled, the distinctive logo was still able to be used; it has been argued that this is what the consumers are more attracted to anyway—the logo, not the team nickname. However, in 2003, there was a reversal of the trademark cancellation and the team has since been able to continue its use of its team nickname; it still has exclusive rights to it and actually never lost the use its nickname in the duration. In 2004, petitioners appealed, wanting the cancellation to be reinstated, but the decision that resulted in the reversal of the trademarks in 2003 was once again affirmed in 2005. The case is currently still on appeal (Cummings, 2008).

Although the case for the use of federal laws has been made quite clear by some scholars, (Baca, 2004; Cummings, 2008), Davis-Delano (2007) finds there is little advantage to using laws to fight for the elimination of mascots. In her study of 14 institutions’ cases regarding Native American imagery, a number of factors impeded the elimination of mascots. Within the seven cases where mascots where retained, these factors included the practice of schools and universities setting barriers by “worshiping” images and supporters creating strong attachment to mascots. In addition, there may actually be more, and more powerful, supporters than non-supporters of the mascots. Since the use of federal laws as a tactic to combat the use of Native American imagery appears to be questionable, in the seven cases where Native American mascots were eliminated, Davis-Delano (2007) found that opponents of mascots did have two factors that worked in their favor: they elected school officials who are in opposition to the use of mascots and they obtained help from local Native Americans. Still, opponents of Native American imagery find themselves fighting to counter suggestions that Native Americans are unconcerned about, or accepting of these images as has been proposed by several studies based on opinion polling.
Sigelman (1998) analyzed data collected from two telephone surveys—one that was national in scope and one that was local to the Washington DC area—to explore attitudes towards the Washington professional football team’s nickname, “Redskins.” The surveys attempted to assess whether the public was sensitive to matters concerning Native Americans. Sigelman (1998) noted that 80% of people surveyed in the DC area and 88% of people surveyed in the nation did not think that the nickname Redskins should be changed. However, more highly educated respondents (as measured in years of school completed) and members of racial minorities (measured as something different than non-Hispanic white) were less likely to support the name “Redskins”—findings that are consistent with prior research indicating that level of education and minority group status are negatively related to support for these types of team nicknames (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Sigelman & Welch, 1991). Moreover, non-Washington fans, and those who did not follow professional football, were more likely to support changing the Redskins nickname. This is consistent with Bresnahan and Flowers’ (2008) findings that high sport involvement leads to embracing these images, thus low sport involvement (non-Washington fans, and people who not follow professional football) may lead to less support. However, in general, there seemed to be much support for the continued use of Redskins by all groups in the survey—a large majority of the respondents were willing to continue use of Redskins, although higher-educated and minority groups members were less likely to support this name, fewer than ¼ of them actually called for a name change.

Other surveys have also attempted to compare Native American opinions with those of the general public. In 2002, Sports Illustrated (SI), a popular magazine, published a public opinion poll of 351 Native Americans and 743 non-Native American sports fans (these two groups were considered distinct). The results indicated that 81% of Native American respondents disagreed with the assertion that high school and college athletic teams should discontinue their use of Native American mascots. Moreover, 83% of Native American respondents indicated that professional sports teams should not discontinue their use of Native American imagery (Price, 2002). Price suggested this provides evidence of Native Americans’ acceptance of names and mascots, a claim that some activist felt could be detrimental to their position. However, some scholars had a different interpretation of the poll. For example, King,
Staurowsky, Baca, Davis, and Pewardy (2002) contend that there were methodological flaws that question the validity of the poll. For example, they raised concerns about the whether the poll had a representative sample of Native Americans. Specifically, they question the process employed by the Peter Harris Research Group. According to King et al. (2002), the pollsters (hired by *SI*) made phone calls for this study, but it was never revealed how the researchers secured the telephone numbers—did they use a random process, a purposive sample or some other sampling method? In addition, King et al. (2002) point out that *SI* never revealed what region their sample came from, or the exact wording of the questions used. Thus, King and colleagues are concerned about the conclusions drawn by Sports Illustrated, given the methodological concerns above. Moreover, the “results” were left unexplained—why were Native Americans nearly indistinguishable from others in their responses to the survey questions?

King and colleagues (2002) raised additional questions about the results of the above poll. The forced assimilation of Native Americans into “white American” culture, for example may have helped to create the kinds of results reported in the *SI* poll. Some examples of consenting to this oppression include that Native Americans have felt extreme pressures to accept the dominant “white culture,” which includes sporting practices. Mascots and names are an important facet of those practices. Another source of acceptance is that so called “positive stereotypes” are a relief from negative stereotypes that have been assigned to Native Americans such as being dependent on alcohol. That is, some Native Americans may support these images because they represent them in a “more” positive way such as being brave and strong. However, “positive stereotypes” are still detrimental and limiting according to King et al. (2002) much like other examples of such stereotypes which would include Asian Americans being represented as smarter than other groups and Jews being represented as having more business savvy. Often, groups do not openly object to what they perceive to be positive stereotypes. However, possibly the biggest error committed by *SI* according to King and colleagues (2002) was concluding that popular opinion can resolve questions regarding power and privilege. That is, even if Native Americans appear to consent to their oppression, it is acceptable? Is popular support sufficient for making policy about mascots and names? It was not too long ago that racial segregation was legal and a majority of Americans supported this system, despite the destructive consequences to
African Americans. That the SI poll failed to take into account the historical context regarding Native American mascots and names is a decided flaw. This, however, does not seem to trouble scholars such as Robidoux (2006) who see in these images self-representations.

While some scholars and observers critique the use of Native American images by sports fans, arguing that they demean and misrepresent groups of people, Robidoux (2006), found that some First Nation people of Canada often wear sport team logos that include Native American images and mascots. This acceptance and adoption of these images by Native people has led some to claim that these images are not racist since the people they are thought to be racializing are not opposed to them. From Robidoux’s perspective, claims that Native peoples have been forced to adopt dominant “white culture” do not take into account how power and race relations actually play out. A number of Native Americans who were interviewed by Robidoux said that they utilized Native American images to bolster their own image and to show their strength, believing that there are positive associations with the images that give them pride. In this context, their meaning and the way the images are used is much different. First Nation peoples have appropriated these images employing it as a tactic against the dominant culture by deciding to use these images for themselves even though the original depiction was not intended to elevate them. This is similar to the apparent acceptance of Native American imagery and the nickname, “Redskins” that was supported via a resolution in 1972 by the Miami Tribe (to be discussed extensively below).

A 2004 poll seems to offer some support for Robidoux’s thesis. Native Americans were asked if they find the nickname "Redskins" to be offensive. The sample population in this poll self-identified as Native American. It was reported that 90 percent of the respondents claiming Native American heritage were unbothered by the name. However, as with the SI poll, self-identification was a methodological concern (Laveay, Callison, & Rodriguez, 2009). Since other evidence seems to suggest otherwise, according to Springwood (2004), there is a possibility that non-Native people choose to self identify or claim Native American heritage as a tactic to gain support for retention. This is a potential drawback when conducting survey research on this topic—the possibility that non-Native respondents may claim Native American group membership. Thus, claims that mascots are not offensive to Native Americans should be viewed skeptically because of methodological flaws, including sampling problems that are often present.
Moreover, in many cases there is no explanation of who represents Native Americans or how the samples are obtained. In addition, anecdotal, personal communications between tribal leaders and researchers suggest tribal leaders are offended, but it appears no systematic study examined this. In order to address these concerns, Laveay, Callison and Rodriguez (2009) used a list of National Congress of American Indians leaders and, via telephone survey, found that Native Americans were more likely than the general U.S. public to be offended by American Indian nicknames and imagery and they think the practice should be discontinued. This finding is contrary to the surveys (reported above), perhaps in part because the sample was more representative of Native American leaders. Similarly, Williams (2007) found that Native American students at the University of North Dakota were more likely than their white peers to feel that the school's nickname, "The Fighting Sioux" is disrespectful and should be changed. Although these two studies do not capture the sentiment of the entire Native American population, these findings suggest, at the very least, that claims that the overwhelming majority of Native Americans embrace or are un-offended by the representations used for athletic teams is problematic. Some have fought hard to remove these images used for sports teams. This thesis deals with a specific removal of a Native American athletic team nickname. A detailed account of what occurred at Miami University is provided next.

Miami University Case Study

For the first twenty years of intercollegiate athletic competition (1888-1908), Miami University had no nickname. Their colors were red and white and had nothing to do with Native American heritage; rather, the colors were adopted by the campus literary societies that were founded in 1825. Nicknames for the athletic teams began surfacing in the early 1900s. These included “The Big Reds” and “The Red and Whites,” both references to the teams' colors, also “The M Men,” and “Old Miami.” In 1928, publicity director Ralph J. McGinnis coined the term “Redskins” for the athletic program and the Varsity M Club became Tribe Miami (Miami University Office of the President, 1996; McDonald & Milne, 1999). In a 1930 Alumni Newsletter, the rationale for choosing Redskins was stated:

Since the state is overrun with Bearcats, Wildcats, Bobcats, Musketeers, and other such-like small deer, members of the Athletic Department went into a huddle not long ago and decided that Miami teams ought to have a moniker and a symbol. As the very name of Miami is taken from an Indian tribe and the term "Big Reds" smacks of Redskins and the
warpath, an Indian brave in warlock and feathers was thought to be a suitable insignia. (Connolly, 2000, p. 520)

The first official reference to the athletic teams using Redskins appeared in the 1931 university yearbook. In the 1950s and 1960s students dressed like Native Americans began to appear at athletic competitions with the marching band. The official mascot in the 1960s was Hiawabop, who was a student dressed up with a painted face. Also during the 1960s, Chief Forest Olds visited the Miami campus and this led to the formal relationship between the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and Miami University (Miami University Office of the President, 1996; McDonald & Milne, 1999). The first public indication that the nickname should change came in 1972 when the Student Senate unanimously passed a bill to stop the use of the term Redskin. The Senate also voted to remove caricatures and cartoons associated with the Indian head mascot. They concluded that it was a racial nickname that was degrading and demeaning (“Senate Votes”, 1972). In an editorial comment it was stated that a group of college students and the Student Senate were in support of civil rights and championed minority equality; they called for the elimination of the derogatory term Redskins (“A Matter of Conscious”, 1972). That summer, in 1972, President Phillip Shriver appointed a committee to examine the relationship between the Miami Tribe and the university’s use of the nickname Redskin. The task force voted to retain the name 5-2, however, the committee’s report recommended the elimination of caricatures such as Hiawabop and that the university use only authentic Native American symbols (Connolly, 2000). A statement was released by the committee stating:

In no way is it our intention to deride, derogate or defame our links with an Indian heritage. Where derision has occurred inadvertently, it is regretted and will be eliminated. If in spite of our efforts to bring honor to the word ‘Redskins,’ we find that there is an increasing unanimity among Indian groups that the term is opprobrious, then we should urge its elimination. (Miami University Office of the President, 1996, n.p.)

In response to the task force decision the Miami Tribe passed and released a resolution in support of the nickname stating:

Whereas, it is our counsel that the name Redskins is a revered and honored name in the eyes and hearts of the people of Miami University, and that it signifies to them as to us the qualities of courage, self-discipline, respect, kindness, honesty, and love exemplified by generations of young athletes, therefore know all peoples that we of Miami blood are proud to have the name Miami Redskin carried with honor by the athletic representation
of Miami University on the playing fields of Mid America and in the arena of the world in International Olympic competition. We, the Miami Redskins of Indian blood, and our namesake, the Miami University Redskins, have a mutual and cherished heritage. May it be blessed by Moneto as long as the winds shall blow. (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, 1972, n.p.)

After the initial effort by the task force to take a closer inspection of the term Redskins as it was used by the University, the relationship with the Miami Tribe grew stronger throughout the 1970s. Scholarships for qualified members of the Tribe were created and also a formal liaison position was formed even though there were few Native Americans on campus (Connolly, 2000). In 1988, the Miami Tribe reaffirmed its 1972 resolution at their business meeting (McDonald & Milne, 1999). However, the debate about the nickname began to resurface in the student newspaper in 1992. A special issue was run in the student newspaper, the Miami Student in November 1992 (“The Redskin Issue”) and the Diversity Affairs Council and the College Republicans squared off in an official debate (“D.A.C.”, 1992).

Beginning in early 1993, there was an editorial in the Miami Student stating that new incoming President Paul Risser needed to address many issues; one of them was the mascot controversy (“Risser Must”, 1993). Other events that shed light on the controversy included a decision by the Editorial Board of the Miami Student in the Spring of 1993 to replace all references to Redskin with other terms and the University Senate's resolution, by a vote of 39-4, to forbid the term from use in any Miami University publication. This resulted in a very public debate about the nickname (“Miami U.”, 1993; “Students Confront”, 1993; “Redskins Banned”, 1993). Amidst the debate, President Risser announced a process to study the use of the term Redskin by the university. His reasoning was that there had been significant debate but not a systematic discussion that brought all viewpoints together. The objectives of the process were to present the issue fairly and ensure that all sides were represented. He had as one of his goals a final decision at the conclusion of the discussion. Beginning in November of 1993, there was a public forum held where people could present their points of view (Risser, 1993a). Speakers had to register for the public forum and were given three minutes each to talk (“‘Redskin’ Registration”, 1993). Seventy-six people spoke at the forum with a large group cheering in the stands (“Song Remains Same”, 1993). In December, 1993, after much deliberation, President Risser laid out his recommendations to the Board of Trustees that academic institutions should
not promote a particular ideology or deny individuals the right to hold unpopular decisions. He stated that each person should decide whether to use the term Redskin and the athletic teams should follow these rules:

Only those University athletic organizations and athletic publications currently using the nickname “Redskin” may continue to use the nickname. Whenever the term “Redskin” is used, the name and any symbol of peoples and cultures must continue to be represented authentically, with dignity and respect. The use of the nickname “Redskins” shall not be expanded beyond representations where it currently appears. All other organizations sponsored by the University and official publications of the University not covered above will use the term “Miami Tribe” as the nickname of the athletic teams. (Risser, 1993b, n.p.)

The Miami Tribe strongly supported Risser’s public discussion and his recommendations and did not object to any changes (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, 1993). The Board of Trustees voted 4-3 in December to accept President Risser’s compromise (“Miami Tribe or Miami Redskins?”, 1993). President Risser and the Board of Trustees likely considered this issue resolved, but it was not. Debate continued over the next few years. In July 1996, the Miami Tribe suddenly withdrew its support for the Redskins nickname and released an official resolution stating:

Whereas, the bonds of friendship and shared heritage between Miami University and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma have grown stronger over the last twenty-five years; Whereas, we realize that society changes, and that what was intended to be a tribute to both Miami University, and to the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, is no longer perceived as positive by some members of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Miami University and society at large; Therefore, be it resolved that the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma can no longer support the use of the nickname Redskins and suggests that the Board of Trustees of Miami University discontinue the use of Redskins or other Indian related names…Be it further resolved, that the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma does not associate the athletic team nickname of Redskins with Miami’s logo, exemplified by the artist’s portrait of an Indian Chief. The Miami Tribe therefore urges Miami University to continue use of the respectful and dignified portrayal of the Indian Chief as its logo and as a reminder to all of the shared heritage of Miami University and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, 1996, n.p.)

The Board of Trustees, in response to this resolution, voted 7-1 in September 1996 to eliminate the use of the term Redskin. Under the new presidential administration of James Garland, a process was undertaken to choose a new nickname for the school (Miami University Office of the President, 1996). President emeritus Phillip Shriver was asked to head the Athletic Nickname Selection Committee. This group reviewed 3,000 names, 700 of which were
different. Five names were forwarded to the Director of Communication at Miami University and focus group discussions which included students, alumni and faculty were conducted. Representatives of the Miami Tribe were also consulted to discuss any substitute nicknames. In early 1997, President Garland received three choices from which he would make his recommendation to the Board of Trustees; they included RedHawks, Thunderhawks, and The Miamis. He recommended RedHawks to the board and in April 1997 and the board voted unanimously for the new nickname, effective June 30, 1997 (“Trustees Approve”, 1997; McDonald & Milne, 1999). While there is a range of opinion regarding the team nickname, many alumni seemed to be overwhelmingly in favor of retaining it. In February 1997, a group sued Miami University to stop the name change. This group included thirteen citizens, nine of whom were alumni. The lawsuit charged that the action of the Board of Trustees caused mental anguish and loss of enjoyment of life to the plaintiffs (“Alumni Sue,” 1997).

A vexing question is whose story counts and why? Oftentimes other competing or counter-narratives are downplayed. This is one reason to explore the narratives of alumni. **Gaps in Literature/Research Question**

Previous research has examined the history and use of the term "Redskin" (c.f., Machamar, 2001); nicknames such as "Redskins," "Braves," "Warriors" and "Indians" (c.f., Miller, 1999; Sigelman, 1998; Connolly, 2000); the use of mascots and logos (Staurowsky, 2004; Laveay, Callison, & Rodriguez, 2009); and the continuing controversy (c.f., Davis-Delano, 2007). However, there is a lack of literature concerning what happens when a collegiate athletic team removes a Native American team name, symbol or mascot. This study purports to address a gap in that literature by examining a specific part of the complex bundle of Native American imagery—Native American team names. It may be of special concern to a university community, both the role and reactions of alumni regarding the decision to discontinue the use of a Native American team name. According to King (2002) alumni support is an integral part of the administrative decisions at colleges and universities. Furthermore, King contends the threat of withholding donations also shapes how mascot (for this study, team nickname) decisions are approached. With this in mind, another gap in the literature has been identified: although Native American tribal leaders, non-Native populations and students have been surveyed in order to measure attitudes and level of approval, alumni of colleges and universities that have removed
their Native American athletic team nicknames have not been studied. And, although, there have been numerous quantitative studies conducted on this topic (reviewed in the opinion research section), my paradigm assumes that the richness needed to understand what is going on cannot be captured in surveys and thus the qualitative interview method will be used (this will be discussed in detail in the methodology section below). Furthermore, alumni of varying cohorts may have different views concerning the nickname change. This study will examine the perceptions of alumni as they pertain to the removal of the name “Redskins” from Miami University’s athletic teams. Using the qualitative interview, the question “How do Miami University alumni perceive and experience the removal of a Native American team nickname from the University's athletic program?” will be investigated within three different cohorts.
Chapter Three
Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore three alumni cohorts’ experiences and perceptions of Miami University’s 1997 decision to change its intercollegiate athletic program’s Native American nickname. Another goal of the study was to understand if and how the perceptions and meanings made of this change varied by cohort. In this chapter the methods used to examine these purposes are described. First, however, qualitative research is discussed followed by a discussion of the research approach and lens (Schram, 2006) that framed this study. Then, the procedures that were employed are described; specifically, recruitment, sampling and analysis.

What is Qualitative Research and Why Do We Do It?

Qualitative research has many definitions but one put forth by Shank (2006) is that qualitative research is “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (p. 4). By systematic, he means that qualitative research is not haphazard or random but has order to it and is public. Public suggests qualitative research is empirical, meaning it depends on real world experiences. Inquiry into meaning identifies the key issue that qualitative research is concerned about how people make sense of social phenomena and what constitutes their meaning (Shank, 2006).

There are several guiding assumptions within qualitative research according to Schram (2006). These include, understanding in the social world is gained through experience in natural settings. The strength of qualitative research is the opportunity to get close to people and their experiences and this unfolds naturally. Something may be lost if the phenomenon is studied in a laboratory setting and not in its natural setting. A second assumption is there must be an acknowledgement of the interactive nature of constructing knowledge. The presence of a researcher and engagement with study participants creates meaningful knowledge. A third assumption is there needs to be sensitivity to context. People and ideas cannot be fully understood if isolated from the context as this distorts and changes the meaning. A fourth assumption is inquiry calls for attentiveness to particulars. Researchers rely on richness and detail in order to provide relevance and they cannot take note of everything but small aspects of experience that are described in detail can speak to larger issues. A fifth assumption is that
qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. Researchers are not simply gathering facts and data that are already in existence but rather they are interpreting and making sense of experiences. This assumes that knowledge is generated not captured. The sixth and final assumption is it is inherently selective because the complexity of social life cannot be replicated. The reason why we do qualitative research is to address the “meaning making” in our area of interest that other methods may not be able to capture because it is hard to quantify the multiple meanings. Also, qualitative research is conducted in order to make things more complex and “problematize” the situation; that is, the goal is not to be reductionistic in nature or engage in problem solution. By inviting consideration of other possible interpretations, the researcher is problematizing (Schram, 2006).

Research Approach

The research approach that was borrowed from for this project was the narrative inquiry approach. According to Schram (2006) this approach focuses on the stories people tell about an event or sense of events that are chronologically connected. This approach is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a small group of individuals and it allows for the researcher to analyze both meanings and motives and how they connect to the way people structure their experiences. Narrative inquiry considers both how the people order and tell their experiences and why they remember and retell their experiences the way they do. These narratives provide a context for interpreting the meaning of an event; in this case the event was the change in athletic team nickname on the Miami University campus. The assumptions of the narrative inquirer include that people frame events into larger structures; the way people tell stories influences how they perceived those specific events; and stories are based in human agency with each narrative having a voice.

In terms of understanding the meaning that people attach to the name change I listened to the participants tell their story. I wanted to understand how they perceived the removal both when it happened and currently. This gets to the point of temporality, that is, we locate people and phenomena in time and this is a natural way to think about them. Schram (2006) also points out that “meaning will change as time passes” (p. 105). Creswell (2007) describes narrative research as exploring the individual and how they make meaning of events primarily using interviews for them to tell their stories. Data analysis, in this study, included retelling study
participant’s stories (also known as “restorying”) and developing themes using chronology. This written report is a developed narrative about the individuals and their experiences pertaining to the use and removal of a Native American athletic team nickname.

Research Lens

The research lens is a perspective that informs the research project. This is because it situates the inquiry within a particular way of knowing. The lens that guided this project is based on Schram’s (2006) conceptualization of the interpretive/critical continuum. At one end of the continuum is the critical lens and a basic tenet of the critical lens is that the researcher undertakes research because s/he thinks that changes are needed. Key questions that are on the top of the mind of the critical researcher are whose interests are being served and whose interests are likely being ignored? This requires the researcher to move beyond describing what the situation is and to offer a critique as well which serves as a function of change. At the other end of the continuum is the interpretive lens. This perspective acknowledges the social construction of reality and its complexity. Focusing on a particular place and time, the interpretivist researcher aims to make sense of the way things are and questions the participant’s perceptions of the way things are while keeping in mind that reality is constructed by the people who live it and tell about it. For this research project, the lens was more towards the interpretive end of the continuum. That is, interview questions concerned with what and how were geared toward making sense of the situation where multiple voices were narrating (Schram, 2006). It is best to think of the research lens as fluid and based on a continuum rather than strict opposites. Although the research lens that guided the interview questions was interpretive, some of the questions did indirectly challenge some ideas that participants shared and the discussion section of the results is critical.

Procedures

Recruitment and Sampling

According to Mason (2002), sampling involves identifying, selecting, and gaining access to relevant data sources. Mason contends that the logic of sampling in qualitative research is different from that in quantitative research. She notes that in qualitative research, “your sample size should help you understand the process (or phenomena in which you are interested) rather than to represent a population and it should be an ongoing and dynamic process” (p. 134). This
is in contrast to probability sampling that is frequently used in quantitative research in order to achieve generalizability. Narrative inquiry does not assure generalizability but can illuminate particular situations of interest. The reason why researchers sample within qualitative research is both practical and strategic. It is practical because it may not be possible to secure access to everything and thus a need to narrow the focus presents itself. It is strategic in that the sample should provide illustrations of your topic. Purposeful sampling was used in the current study in order to recruit people who could tell me about the phenomena of interest and answer questions about what was studied. As Mason (2002) defines it, the goal was to construct a sample that was meaningful both empirically and theoretically, but not necessarily representational.

Given that one purpose of my study was to compare the perceptions of those who attended the university before, during, and after the name change, I recruited participants to represent one of three cohorts: Cohort one included participants who graduated prior to 1993. The year 1993 was chosen because this was the year that university-led public discussions about the Native American athletic team nickname began. That is, these individuals would have graduated prior to these discussions. The university’s athletic program’s nickname was Redskins during their tenure on campus.

Cohort two included graduates from classes between 1993 and 1999. This group was at Miami during the time period of university-led discussions about the proposed change to the nickname (that occurred during 1993) and/or the university’s decision to drop the nickname (that occurred in 1996). That is, the second group was at the university when its intercollegiate athletic program had the nickname Redskins and even possibly spent some time with the nickname RedHawks based on the year they started their tenure on campus. For example, undergraduate students who started in the Fall of 1995 and took four years to graduate would have been there during a time period where RedHawks was the athletic team nickname.

Cohort three is comprised of those individuals who graduated from the university after 1999. They are alumni who were students at the university after the formal discussions and the decision was made to change the nickname. That is, this group attended the university during the time when the name had already been changed. Graduation year was chosen and used based primarily on a four year undergraduate degree; however I did place participants into groups who
only spent two years on campus as graduate students. Thus, the main criterion for placement was time period spent on campus; either before, during, or after the change.

In this study, I not only employed purposeful sampling but I also used convenience, opportunistic, and snowball sampling (Shank, 2006). Initially I contacted the university’s alumni association and asked if they would be willing to assist me in recruiting study participants. After meeting with the director and explaining the purpose and process of the study, he agreed to e-mail alumni from each cohort who were part of the sampling universe (Mason, 2002) for this study (see previous paragraph for discussion on cohort selection). The data branch of the alumni association office gathered the list of email addresses and they were randomly chosen. The invitation letter was then sent out to 50 alumni in each cohort (150 total) on two different occasions via electronic mail asking for participation. This produced insufficient numbers as the return rate was zero—no one responded. Thus, another technique was used; snowball sampling. That is, once one participant was interviewed the researcher asked if that participant could refer another person, so I identified potential participants through personal relationships and referrals from others. The very first participant had heard about the project through an academic gathering and voluntarily agreed to be interviewed. This person then referred me to two more participants. A colleague/classmate to the researcher was able to provide two more names and this led to a third person through the referral from one of the original referrals.

Another way participants were secured was a contact in another academic department on campus sent out the invitation letter one time to an alumni listserv of an interdisciplinary studies major. This secured four more participants but not all were the same major as people who initially received the letter passed it along to others. The opportunistic technique, which according to Shank (2006) involves “tracking down leads”, was used as well. In an effort to diversify the sample, a university professor provided contact information for former students who self-identified as minority students. This gained two participants. The final two participants were secured using informal conversations with people who the researcher knew and they provided contact information of people whom may be interested.

Participation remained voluntary throughout the entire process. There was a criterion to be eligible to participate in the study—alumni had to answer “yes” to the question “do you
believe you can talk to me about the use and/or change in the Native American athletic team nickname at Miami University?"

The Qualitative Interview

The process of the qualitative interview is unique and has been described by Mason (2002) as a conversation with a purpose where the researcher has starting points for the discussion. The focus is on lived experiences—the narratives that the participants tell. There are several reasons why we do qualitative interviews. One is an ontological position that assumes that people’s perceptions are meaningful within our social reality. Another is an epistemological position that assumes that a legitimate way to generate knowledge and meaning about social phenomena is to interact with those experiences of the phenomena. The qualitative interview should seek to conjure up the interviewee’s experiences of the social phenomena of interest. In order for me to report about this topic, it requires an understanding of the complexity of people’s experiences (Mason, 2002).

We converse daily with people, but within a qualitative interview the process is to understand the meaning of what someone is telling you. According to Shank (2006), all communication, including qualitative interviews, have several functions. The first is the referential function which is the passing of information from sender to receiver and then its subsequent analysis. The second function is the emotive function which refers to the feelings that the sender is trying to get the receiver to hear. The third is the conative function which is the persuasive function of the message where the sender wants the receiver to act. A fourth function is the metalingual function which centers around codes, and “the larger than language” meaning of what is being said. A fifth function is the poetic function meaning that communication is delivered in a certain manner on purpose and it is best to pay careful attention to this. A sixth and final function of communication is the phatic function, which is the degree to which the channel between the receiver and sender is open. What these functions meant for me in the process of conducting my study was that I paid attention to emphasis placed on certain answers as well as the repeating key points.

In terms of the pragmatics of qualitative interviewing, during the process of the interview the researcher should be engaged and actively listening. A tape recorder is typically used to capture the interview so minimal writing is done during it. Then the researcher should let the
interview take its “natural length” and when it feels as if the interview is coming to an end the researcher should check to see if there is anything more the interviewee could add that she/he has not had a chance to share, as this can be very meaningful. The process is about listening, not about arguing or disagreeing, so researchers have to “bracket” their assumptions or preconceived notions. A qualitative interview should begin with a “grand tour question” which is a general question to situate the topic then the researcher should move on to “mini-tour questions” to get to more detail. After that, the researcher should let the interview flow “naturally”—while at the same time ask probing and follow-up questions to generate the information that is needed to explore the research question. As with any process, it might not go according to plan as it unfolds but learning to deal with silences and unexpected answers is a good skill to master. In terms of silences, it may be uncomfortable at first but researchers should not be afraid of them. Interviewing is a process and the researcher will become more skilled at it with practice over time (Shank, 2006).

Specifically, for this project I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews. Shank (2006) notes that semi-structured interviews allow for some latitude about how questions are asked and what follow-up questions are asked but all participants are asked the same basic questions in order to maintain some degree of comparability across interviews. Each semi-structured qualitative interview had a specific meeting set up for a date and time that was convenient for the participant. Interviews either took place via telephone or in-person at a location that was accessible, relatively quiet and free of distractions. With the in-person interviews I started with the Informed Consent Sheet, and asked them to sign this form and have a witness other than the researcher sign as well (see Appendix B). All participants were over the age of 18 years old so no parental consent was needed. For the participants who were interviewed via telephone, the Informed Consent Sheet was read to them and then they were asked to verbally consent to the questions. An electronic copy of the sheet was sent to all participants who were interviewed via telephone for their records. I asked each person to fill out a background information sheet if in-person and if conducted via telephone the participant responded to background information questions (Appendix C). The functioning of the tape recorder was tested, and the interview began. The study participants were reminded that they could choose to not answer any questions, and could ask for clarification of any question if it was
not understood. Participants were also informed that they may stop the interview at any time for any reason, and that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers—the researcher was interested in their experiences and perceptions. The Interview Guides served as a reminder of what questions/issues that I wanted to explore during the interview. There were three slightly different interview guides for the three different groups that had appropriate language and tenses for questions (see Appendix D). Throughout the interview probing or follow-up questions were asked in order to understand the meaning of what the interviewee was telling me. When all of the questions that were part of the Interview Guide were addressed and it was felt that the interview is coming to an end, all interviewees were asked a final open-ended question—if there is anything else that they could tell me about their perceptions of Native American athletic team nicknames and the change of Miami University’s athletic team nickname that they had not had an opportunity to say but that they think would help me understand the topic. This provided participants a chance to add to their responses. After each of the individual interviews ended, the study participants were asked if they have any questions and they were thanked for participating, no compensation was awarded. Each tape was labeled with the participant’s number and was kept in a secure place until analysis began and tapes were held separate from the participant key that provided identifying information.

Analysis

According to Shank (2006), there are four phases common to the qualitative analysis process. The first is defining what type of analysis to use. This can vary based on where the researcher finds him- or herself in the continuum of qualitative science to qualitative inquiry. Qualitative science works within the broader framework of science but is used when phenomena are not easily measured while qualitative inquiry is in the service of understanding and is often times grounded in culture, society and history. The second phase is classifying the data. By organizing the data the researcher can better sort out the meaning. A third phase is making connections to different classes of data. By asking “what are the data telling me?” the researcher creates themes that s/he saw emerging. Thematic analysis is searching for patterns in data and themes that can emerge while in the coding process which is just making note of things that need revisiting and providing a key for the code. At a certain point, the thematic analysis will reach the saturation point (Shank, 2006). The fourth and final phase is presenting the results of the
analysis. This involves rich and in-depth description in the results and discussion sections of a research process.

After the interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber, I “had a conversation with the data” by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts many times over. According to Shank (2006) coding is a process of selective attention that involves marking “slices of data” that answer one’s research question. In the case of this study that was identifying words/thoughts that answered the question “how do Miami University alumni perceive and experience the removal of a Native American team nickname from the University’s athletic program?” Next the “meaning(s)” of those slices were considered and constructed. This was done for each interview and then where possible, meaning units were grouped into themes. Meaning units and themes were then examined both within and across the three cohorts for similarities and differences. “Researcher triangulation” (Johnson, 1997) was conducted during initial analysis (i.e., in the identification of slices of data and the construction of meaning units and possible themes) and in the initial comparisons across the cohorts.
Chapter Four

Results

The research question for this study was “How do Miami University alumni perceive and experience the removal of a Native American team nickname from the University's athletic program?” Fourteen semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with alumni from Miami University representing one of three cohorts to explore the experiences and perceptions of those who graduated by 1993 (before the removal of the nickname was discussed or implemented), those who graduated between 1993 and 2000 (during the time the nickname was removed), and those who graduated after 2000 (after the change was implemented). Presented in this chapter are the results of thematic analysis of the interviews. The meta themes that crossed all cohorts, as well as cohort specific themes, are discussed. First, however, a description of the study participants is presented.

Study Participants

Study participants were alumni of Miami University who graduated between the years of 1979 and 2007. There were a total of 14 participants who represented the three cohorts described previously. Of the 14 participants, ten were male and four were female. Two participants identified themselves as having Native American ancestry, while one participant identified as African American and the remaining 11 participants identified themselves as white. Names have been replaced by numbers to ensure privacy. Table 1 provides a brief description of the study participants.
**Table 1**

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<th>Interview #</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Identified Race/Gender</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>G3</td>
<td>white male</td>
<td>student athlete/currently in graduate school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>white male</td>
<td>faculty member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>G3</td>
<td>white female</td>
<td>student athlete/currently a defense contractor</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>white male</td>
<td>CEO</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>G2</td>
<td>white male</td>
<td>works in advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>white male</td>
<td>works in aviation field</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>G3</td>
<td>Native American/white female</td>
<td>works in non-profit sector</td>
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<td>white/Native American ancestry male</td>
<td>CFO</td>
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G1- group 1 (graduation years pre-1993)

G2- group 2 (graduation years 1993-2000)

G3- group 3 (graduation years post-2000)
Themes

As is the case with narrative qualitative research, there are as many stories as there are people telling them. What is important, however, is that these are the particular stories that people chose to tell and retell in a given time and space. There were three themes that arose across all cohorts. These will be presented first and then what was unique to each cohort will be reported. Thus, six themes will be presented next. The three meta themes that emerged irrespective of cohort are, It’s P.C., It’s Invention, and Erasing Tradition. Although the themes are presented in distinct sections they are interrelated. The overlap of meanings provides further evidence that people do not live their lives in discrete ways. The belief that the new nickname had to be invented as to not offend anyone (It’s Invention) is tied to the perception that it was a politically motivated move to change in the first place (It’s P.C.). Cohort specific themes for cohort one, two and three, are Controversial, End of an Era, and You Have to Understand the Context, respectively. This chapter ends with speculations about patterns that were observed but that were not fully explored given the parameters of this study. These speculations have to do with the possibility that race of study participants and study participants’ critical consciousness shape how they experienced the change in team nickname. That is, factors other than cohort play a role in study participants’ perceptions and meaning making.

Theme 1- It’s P.C.

The term “politically correct” or P.C. was evident throughout the interviews. Many participants perceived and experienced the removal of the team nickname Redskins as being an act of political correctness – that is, it was changed only because RedHawks was “safe” or “neutral” and they discussed how the change occurred because language had to be more sensitive. Whether it was framed as part of the time period, attributed to university administrators and faculty attempting to be PC, or discussed in a way that explained that other people saw the change in this light, this theme emerged quite strongly. It permeated some participants’ interviews. Outside forces or “political pressures” were given as reasons why the change occurred and the Miami Tribe’s one-time endorsement of Redskins was one way to justify the reluctance to embrace new language.
Cohort One (pre-1993 graduates)

When asked “What do you think about Miami University using the term Redskins?” interviewee six conveyed his dislike of the nickname (RedHawks) that replaced it – and the politics he perceived were involved – when he stated:

**I#6:** I absolutely think it’s distasteful [the RedHawks]. I think when the university had the permission of the Miami tribe to continue using the Redskin moniker I think they caved into political pressure so I was very disappointed to hear that.

Responding to the same question, interviewee seven had this to say:

**I #7:** Never thought twice about it at the time.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So have your thoughts changed about this now?

**I #7:** Well, it certainly has become an issue. Since probably since right around when I was graduating and beyond is when the Native Americans started voicing their protest about our Native American names used for teams and you know I really -- I hadn’t -- I would say my thoughts have changed since then only because now I’ve thought about it. But you know prior I just hadn't really given it much thought. And I think I've gone through sort of an evolution of how I've thought about it. When it first started coming out I was very much thinking, yes, absolutely, change the name, it is disrespectful. If the tribe that you're naming yourself after is not happy with the naming, then you should drop it. And I still sort of think that but I also think that a very vocal minority has sort of corrupted the English language and is in other ways, not so much team names, but in other ways. And the whole political correctness movement has actually perverted the English language and we can say and what we can't say to an extent that it is difficult to - - you know it is difficult to even speak about different things because you don't know what's going to be offensive and what's not. So that's kind of where I sit on it. It's -- why would honoring an Indian tribe be offensive, A; the word Redskin, you know I can kind of see that that's more derogatory than if it was the Miami, Miami tribe or something like that might not be so offensive. So I get that that might cross the line but I also think that when we were named the Miami Redskins I think it was probably came from a place of honoring and not of insulting.

Within this first cohort, the idea that it was a political decision or a consequence of political pressure seemed to mean that a small group of people wanted to change the name, not a large vocal opposition – and primary in the push for change were faculty and staff or perhaps activists.

**I#4:** Okay and that was under a new President,...and his response was that he wanted to get this issue behind him, that he had a lot of pressure from the academic community, you know the professors and staff.

Interviewee number seven discusses how it was not an issue until activists became vocal:
Interviewer: So if I'm hearing you correctly, when you were here on the campus it wasn't an issue for you?

I#7: It wasn't an issue. I think it became an issue right when I was leaving, you know, no one even thought about it until some Native American activists brought it up, and that's when everybody said, Oh, yeah okay I get it now. It wasn't something that had been brewing and brewing and brewing that we knew about anyway.

Interviewer: So you said that there may have been some Native American activists around the time period that you were here or is that nationally?

I#7: Not that I know, I'm just thinking you know I'm assuming that it was a Native American activist organization of some sort that initially brought the petition to Miami University to change their name. I may be wrong. I mean it might have been some you know liberal college professors.

This perception demonstrates that the larger national scene of the visible protests to Native American imagery in the 1990’s was an important context for how these alumni made sense of the discussion of and debates surrounding possibly changing the University’s sport teams’ nickname. That is, some alumni in this cohort expressed that opposition to removing the Redskins nickname was due, at least in part, to frustration with a “phase” of political correctness. Participant number four also conveyed this sentiment when he stated:

I#4: I think the other thing is I think at the time I’m trying to think back to, it has been 13 [years] that — and I think people got to a point they were fed up with political correctness. And then there was a sense that this was more political correctness that was taking place. And so that might have weighed into it too, a frustration level of a perceived political correctness is what was driving some of that. So it could have been that this was just the final straw on so many things that were -- I mean there were times in the 90's that as a man I was advised, don't hold a door open for a woman anymore because that's not good. And then there was another generation that then it went sort of full circle, like wait a minute we still like that chivalry, and so there is a great deal of confusion by a lot of people like what am I supposed to do or say?

Cohort Two (1993-1999 graduates)

Participant number fourteen discussed how it might have been political action groups who decided that the old nickname was offensive:

Interviewer: So you don't remember anything in particular about -- like because obviously you came in, this name is changing, were you curious about why it was changing or was that talked about?

I#14: Yeah, I do remember wondering why it was talked about and knowing that it was out of respect thing, it wasn't PC, it wasn't politically correct to--I think people thought it was a derogatory term against the American Indians and the Miami Indians. So that was
the main push, you know, of these groups of individuals that wanted to deal with it more politically correct.

**Interviewer:** So I'm just trying to hear what you said there. It was a PC thing?

I#14: It was, the side of it where people wanted to change it was to be politically correct, being appropriate.

**Interviewer:** And you said like the people on both sides of that people were looking at who are those -- who are those people do you remember?

I#14: I don't remember. I don't know, I don't know if it was alumni that decided it was offensive or if it was other political action groups that maybe had no affiliation. I don't remember.

For interviewee number eleven, the change was mainly characterized as a politically correct move that was driven by the administration. He discussed this extensively and explained it in the following way:

#11: It seemed more -- the Redskins, I guess I mean the RedHawk name I guess is a little more generic. The Redskins, while it may not become completely politically correct, tied to the word using the Miami name, the tribe.

**Interviewer:** So, how do you, just kind of your own words and your experiences, how would you explain some people being attached to the Redskin name while others seemingly are not so attached to it?

I#11: The ones that wanted the change were not so much attached to the school or the history behind it, but what the implications of using it as a derogatory name might have been. They didn't want -- they were trying to be politically correct, trying to think of a name [that] they thought would not cause any problems, would be you know, you know, PC.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Just trying to make sure I'm clarifying what you're saying. Was it mostly administration led or where do you think the push was kind of coming from? You've talked about people who wanted to be PC.

I#11: The change?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

I#11: I think it's more -- I think it was more administration. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Now, I also used PC, but you used the word PC too. I know what that means in terms of what I think it means, but people have different --

I#11: Politically correct, don't want to offend anybody, make it neutral.

**Interviewer:** Neutral?

I#11: Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Is there anything else you think that can help me to kind of wrap up here?

I#11: No, that's pretty much it. You know it was debated, it was talked about, everybody had an opinion. I think the majority -- this is my opinion but I think the majority students supported the old name and I think some students supported the new name. And there [were] debates that happened but I think the name was driven more by administration
and external pressures than inside. Or alumni, but I think alumni supported the old name too.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay. External pressures, from?

**I#11:** Political pressures.

For interviewer number twelve the justification came from the idea that it was during a politically correct time period because for all the years prior to that, people did not seem to think it was offensive.

**I#12:** And so -- well I'm guessing that it was you know kind of the start of how everything being in a PC world and you know wanting to follow political correctness and being afraid to offend or alienate anyone. And I think, my opinion is, I mean the university just sort of jumped on that band wagon.

**Interviewer:** Okay. You mentioned earlier in one of your responses about jumping on the band wagon or the PC thing. Can you talk about that a little bit more?

**I#12:** Yeah, that's just my opinion. Yeah, I just think it seems to me around that time you know being politically correct about things was really, you know, as much a buzz word, as much as just you know starting to be a way of life. People were sensitive to other people, other cultures, you know, and so I think we probably tended to and still do to this day sometimes maybe take, you know, go a little overboard on it. You know it wasn't an issue for you know let's see two hundred years, you know, almost. And now it became an issue. And I would have thought that if that use of that name would have been offensive in any way that it surely would have been an issue a hundred years prior to that knowing how long the university was in existence, not knowing of course that they had the name Redskins all that time, that I don't know. I don't remember that in my old history of Miami (inaudible) during freshman year.

**I#12:** So yeah, [that's] just -- my recollection is it seemed like that time is when you know being PC was you know kind of more of a -- I don't know what's the right word. But you know it had a heightened sensitivity I guess--

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**I#12:** --to be politically correct about things.

Later in his interview:

**Interviewer:** So you said that university had given you a reason why you thought maybe because they were trying to be less offensive and you mentioned that you were not really sure where it was coming from, like who was making this?

**I#12:** Yeah, I'm not sure who was driving it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**I#12:** Yeah, I'm not sure if it was a group of; you know, ancestors of you know original Miami Indians or if it was, you know, some other, you know, group that decided that they would take on this cause. That I don't know.
Unlike participants eleven, twelve, and fourteen who said it was politically correct, interviewee number five discusses how it got framed as politically correct while not including himself in the politically correct argument:

#5: I think most people had an opinion. Most of the people -- it seemed like it was frequently -- the topic was frequently put in the setting of political correctness that it was like if you wanted the mascot to change you were doing it just for superficial reasons and not for anything concrete. And then if you wanted the mascot to stay the same then you were doing it like for like reactionary reasons...

The third cohort that includes graduation years after 2000 still discussed the issue of political correctness but in a somewhat different way than the older alumni.

Cohort Three (post 2000 graduates)

Interviewee number three stated:

Interviewer: Do you remember hearing anything about why people changed or was that not an issue for you or can you speak to that?
I#3: Sure. It wasn't an issue for me but I'm sure it came along the time where a lot of schools were changing because of a movement to be more politically correct.

Other participants in this group told the story differently, stating it was the NCAA who made the university change. Interviewee number nine said:

I#9: So when we changed from Miami Redskins to Miami RedHawks I don't think the real reason they were changing it was to have a more PC name, keep it clean and clean image school. I think 90 percent of it was direct pressure from the NCAA saying they had to change their name or they were going to have sanctions if you will on that.

Interviewer: Understanding what you are saying. You didn't think it was necessarily like a political correctness move?
I#9: Correct.
Interviewer: You would say it was not characterized like that.
I#9: Yeah.

Interview number ten stated:

Interviewer: So it still seems to be somewhat of an issue even though they had changed the name prior to you coming?
I#10: It was clearly -- I mean the university had clearly tried to balance, you know, their need to change for both political and, you know, probably economic reasons going forward, but they had tried to balance that as an organization by maintaining some of that identity with the logos when it came to anything with athletics.
He then followed up later in the interview stating:

**I#10:** *My understanding is you know it was change due to the derogatory nature of the name. You know subsequently, you know, the NCAA came out with its regulations regarding the mascots and the use of Native American nicknames for the schools, but I don't believe -- although pending regulation may have been the incitement of change, I don't think the actual immediate loss of championship venues and that type of thing had actually come into play when they had made the change. I may be wrong on that, but that's my recollection of it.*

Another example of the “politics” of the decision emerged when some study participants talked about the Miami Tribe’s endorsement of Redskins. Some interviewees explained that people who did *not* support the name Redskins “just did not understand.” These interviewees believed that because the Tribe endorsed the name Redskins at one time, then it was acceptable. This was a common rationale provided by study participants for using the nickname and for retaining it. This relates to the 1972 resolution that the Miami Tribe released initially in support of the name.

**Cohort One (pre-1993 graduates)**

Participant number six discussed the idea that there was endorsement from the Miami Tribe to use the name earlier in his quotations and bluntly states:

**I#6:** *The university had the endorsement of the Miami tribe.*

In a follow up question interviewee six stated:

**Interviewer:** *Okay. Do you think there [have] been any consequences, either positive or negative, of this change?*

**I#6:** *I don't think I'm in a position to respond to that because I simply don't know. I know how I feel about it. I'm disappointed that the university did that. And I talked to people that are like me that are as disappointed, but I'm sure that there are those that are pleased because they felt it was (inaudible). I certainly don't agree especially when you have the endorsement of the -- Miami Indians...I'm just disappointed again that they chose to cave into the political pressure that forced them to change the name when they had the option not to.*

Participant number four illustrates the subtheme of endorsement:

**I#4:** *And as I recall there was a coalition of university professors who were putting a lot of heat on the trustees as well that it was high time, this was offensive kind of term to use to the Miami tribe which is in Oklahoma I believe. But I think that was somewhat*
controversial because I kind of recall also that some representatives of the Miami tribe had indicated that they were comfortable with the way things were handled within Miami University with respect to using the Miami tribe name which you know is how Miami University got its name is Miami tribe.

Participant number two is unsure if the Miami Tribe endorsed the name and also cannot understand why they would, if they did.

I#2: You know, like we had this thing when the controversy was going on there was this you know the response that the Miami tribe had sort of blessed the use of the word. And you know, that may -- I don't know the details, that may be true. Maybe they did say go ahead and use it. But, I can only speak from the average people that I have met for members of various Native American communities and you know those people I have met are very, you know, they are offended by it so I can't speak for the tribal hierarchy. But I can tell you that I have known a lot of average Native American folks and they don't like the terminology.

Cohort Two (1993-1999 graduates)

Within cohort two, participant number twelve, when asked about his memories to the reactions of the change, responded:

I#12: I think generally most people I know were somewhat disappointed to see the name change. I mean it wasn't the end of the world, but I don't think -- never quite understood. I mean I understood why they changed it, and I know that people understood why they changed it, the university explained it, but was also my understanding that that group of Miami Indians didn't really even -- I don't know that it really offended them that I understood. And you know if you look throughout it isn't like we don't have other sports teams with the name Redskins even still to this day.

Participant number eleven describes how he thought the Miami Tribe did not have a problem with the nickname Redskins:

I#11: They also didn't want to upset the Miami tribe. But it was odd because up until that point the Miami tribe had no problems with the Redskins name. I don't know that the tribe itself actually -- I don't know what was going on with them actually. But it was basically the people that were supporting the change were more in terms of political correctness and didn't want to offend anybody, didn't want to offend the tribe, didn't want to impersonate as a biased or bigoted university by using the name so they wanted to change it.

Alluding to the 1972 resolution, participant number fourteen recalls:

I#14: I remember a few local people that had been athletes here, I remember them being a little bit, very out spoken about it and upset about the possibility of the change and they
thought very hard not to. I remember that. But specific topics on it. I do remember one quote that people kept saying was I guess it was in a contract somewhere and I haven't seen it personally that we were allowed to use the Redskin name, this is from the Miami tribe, allowed us to use the Redskin name for as long as the wind shall blow. And so everyone was, that was for keeping the name was obviously saying well I guess the wind’s not blowing, we’re not allowed to use it anymore. I do remember that type of discussion.

A few comments later he adds:

**Interviewer:** Okay. Do you remember hearing or seeing anything particular that kind of sticks out in your mind during this time period when the name was being changed?

**I#14:** I think the only thing that really sticks out is that as long as the wind shall blow people saying that that was in some contract somewhere. And you know, that's the only thing I kind of remember sticking out. That and the bumper stickers all over the place, everywhere, Redskins forever and the t-shirts and all that. That sticks out the most.

Cohort Three (post 2000 graduates)

Within cohort three, participant number one also references the 1972 resolution:

**I#1:** [They] had quotes from that, from one of the leaders of the Miami tribe that said something along the lines of as long as the wind shall blow, the Miami tribe will be proud as the Miami University Redskins. And so there was a lot of people that believe, honestly believed that they were doing some kind of honor or, I don't know, I guess honor to the tribe, the Miami tribe through that nickname. And it did kind of come through for me at least that idea that when we change over to RedHawks people would forget that Miami was the name of a Native American tribe.

Participant number nine says that the when the name changed it was only rumor that the Miami Tribe wanted it to change:

**I#9:** Yeah. I mean overall the experiences seemed like when I look back on it just my view of it is sort of a politics situation that they had to change the name. And when I look at it from an overall like what the university had to do, it just wasn't really a choice for them, they needed to make the change. And I think a lot of that drive was from the NCAA. There was some talk around that they had received communications from the Miami tribe that they wanted the name changed as well, so that was all rumor. I never saw -- I always thought if they had something they would have publicized that or shown it around, but you never saw it. So there is rumor that that happened, but I don't know. It just seemed -- it was just kind of a weird situation.

**Interviewer:** So if there was communication from the tribe, you were not aware of it?

**I#9:** I mean they never published it. I never saw it.
When asked if she had heard or learned anything about the history of the team name at Miami, participant number eight recalls and explains her conversations with the Chief of the Miami Tribe while she was in school, and the concept of their initial endorsement:

**I#8:** I know that there were in some, or there was some conversations with the Miami tribe about the mascot and the use of that. And especially in terms of the regalia that the school had on display. And I remember talking to -- a big part of the Native American student teachers at the school and I was with a friend that helped get that organization reestablished while I was there. And so we had a conversation about their mascot and talked a little bit about the history. I don't think -- we -- I could talk about it as much as possible with folks because we were both were interested in educating people. And so we learned a little bit of the history for that. And now it has just been so long I don't remember all of it. But I also do remember talking to the Miami chief at some point about the mascot and the history issue. And you know he just -- well basically he said you know we've -- we gave approval for them to use it and we gave them approval to use some of the regalia and since we've done that we feel that it is an okay symbol and acceptable and that's what I was told at the time. You know I talked to him about my experiences with that word and what it felt like it was so derogatory and how I just did not feel like it was an appropriate symbol to be using.

**Interviewer:** And this was during your time at school, these conversations?

**I#8:** Yeah, this is all during my time at school.

The first theme, *It’s P.C.*, involved the perceptions and attitudes that the change was made because it was politically correct to do so. That is, the change was not made because it is really racist but, instead because a small group of people such as liberal professors or Native American activists who were offended by the name. Some of the interviewees talked about the name change as being politically motivated because after all, the Tribe endorsed the nickname Redskins. Thus, for most of the participants the change was described as being driven by outside pressures.

**Theme 2- It’s Invention**

The second theme identified in the data had to do with what was seen as the process of choosing the new athletic team nickname. The perception that some participants had was that the name change was viewed as a loss of a longed-for identity in favor of an invented nickname. This closely relates to the nostalgia that some have today for Native Americans of the past (Davis, 1993). The re-imagining of the “west” and forgetting the vibrant culture that still exists is apparent in some of the interviews. However, not everyone saw this the same way. Some wanted the new nickname to still capture the “honor” they felt Redskins conveyed (and did not
feel RedHawks did so). At the same time, another felt RedHawks represented strength and ferocity. Others took the position that RedHawks were not real. Yet another noted that the “white man’s” imagining of Native Americans does not exist in his daily routine. Whatever their particular point of view (and whether memory or reaction), many study participants perceived that the process of choosing the new nickname was an invention as the quotes below illustrate.

Cohort One (pre 1993 graduates)

When asked if he had an attachment to the nickname Redskins, participant number four illustrates this theme:

1#4: And it may have even made sense because we are named after the Miami tribe so, to be the Miami tribe. I don't know if that was even considered or that was ruled out by any tribe as a mascot (inaudible). But RedHawk came out of left field and it had no association with the Miami tribe which we were you know the university was named. So you know there was some lack of logic to it too.

Interviewer: Would you say you had an attachment to the Redskins name?
1#4: I wouldn't say I had an attachment per se. You know, it -- I -- you know, it made logical sense to me but you know honestly if I had heard that, if I had heard concerted feedback from the true Miami tribe in Oklahoma that, hey, we find that offensive. That would be like calling you know using a term of any different ethnic group or whatever by a name that focused on their skin color or a physical trait and they said -- I would be fine with saying let's find something -- What I would have preferred is say let's find something that could still maintain the heritage with the Miami tribe and find a name that everybody can kind of feel that-- that honors the Miami tribe, honors the school heritage, but instead they decided let's pick a -- invent a bird. I really don't think there's a RedHawk. I think they invented it. So you can't offend something -- that kind of got to me too because I'm like, God, we're going out of our way. Let's just call it the, you know, the Miami, you know, air or something. I mean let's find, we can't offend the air I guess, I don't know. I just felt like there was such an effort not to offend anything it is just kind of like at some point you know, invent a bird. I guess I kind of lost interest in the whole thing.

Then when asked if he had any feelings toward the new nickname the RedHawks, he added:

1#4: I'm not fond of it, yeah. I think we could come up with something a little more appropriate probably also a little more compelling, creative. I just again I think it was in my opinion not being on the inner circle it appears to me from my perspective they came up with a very politically correct, safe name that gosh, the -- the only -- the family of hawks might be offended, but otherwise we're safe. I don't know, on the other hand I would have to say I don't -- I think there are bigger fish to fry than the school mascot nickname.
Participant number six also felt that RedHawks is a “thing” that does not exist – very emphatically so:

Interviewer: Do you have any emotions surrounding the team nickname [RedHawks]?
I#6: Yeah, absolutely, I hate it.
Interviewer: Yeah.
I#6:… But no, I just -- I couldn't even tell you what a RedHawk is except I have no idea what it is. I'm just disappointed again that they close to cave into the political pressure that forced them to change the name when they had the option not to.

Within cohort one, participant number seven has a contrasting view about the new nickname:

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any feelings toward the new name, the RedHawks?
I#7: Well I like it. You know, I like birds, you know, and I don't want to say aggressive but you know I think it is a good team sort of mascot. So I like it, I like it, I think it was a good change.
Interviewer: Okay. So you say it was a good team mascot meaning --
I#7: Yeah, I think the RedHawk evokes fighting spirit, you know all of those team things and a bird that soars above, that climbs, all that stuff. Where Redskin, you know that also presumably at the time I'm sure it was, we're going to fight, we're going to attack, we're going to, you know, band together as a group sort of the tribal thing. I'm sure it had those sort of connotations, team connotations that were not necessarily negative at the time. I like RedHawk better just because it is just a more uplifted sort of symbol I think.

Cohort Two (1993-1999 graduates)

Within cohort two, participant number eleven had this to say about the new nickname:

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any feelings about the new nickname RedHawks?
I#11: No, not really, it's somewhat -- I think the only thing with it is usually the mascots of a team are trying to I think they a lot of times try to tie to the local community or the history or whatever. So, you know for instance the Ohio State's a buckeye or the buckeye's the state, you know, tree of Ohio. Or Ohio University has the Bobcats, well they are in the hills and there's actually a lot of bobcats outside of there. Miami was the Redskins and it was tied to the Miami name that came from the Indian tribe. RedHawk is kind of generic. It is not tied to anything. So other than that, I don't have any deep feelings toward it other than I think it is a little generic.

Echoing the sentiment that he does not know what a RedHawk is, when asked the same question about if he has any feelings toward the new nickname RedHawks participant number fourteen stated:

I#14: I'm not sure what a RedHawk is to be honest. So, yeah, I mean it is better than like a red brick. At least it is an animal or something that has -- I mean when you think of an
mascot you think kind of like the fighting spirit of the university, and so it's better than like a brick, I think that was one that was kind of thrown out there was the red bricks.

**Interviewer:** The red bricks?

**I#14:** I could be wrong, but I kind of -- maybe that was a joke option or what. A RedHawk at least is a hawk, it is a strong, you know, strong animal. And that, so I think it is a good name but I'm not really sure what it is. I don't think -- is there an actual RedHawk?

Participant number five explains his lack of contact with Native Americans as his reasoning for liking the new name:

**Interviewer:** So my next question you kind of answered it though was do you have any feelings toward the RedHawks nickname?

**I#5:** Yeah, just that. I mean the hawk is something I can relate to.

**Interviewer:** Um-hmm, okay. You mean relate to how?

**I#5:** Like, I can see them in the wild I can feel like is that the RedHawk? Do you know what I mean?

**Interviewer:** Right. Right.

**I#5:** It is sort of like birds exist in my world whereas people with war paint and loincloths do not.

Although he does not have an opinion one way or another, participant number twelve seems to like the Redskins name better:

**Interviewer:** Okay. That's it. I just have just kind of a wrapping up question that's just if there's anything else that you feel that you haven't been able to talk about or anything else that would be helpful to understand this topic, just kind of like open-ended.

**I#12:** Yeah, no, not really. I mean, you know, -- I guess if I compared it to the Redskins was a cooler nickname than RedHawks. RedHawk I think is an actual bird but I think if you asked most people they really wouldn't be sure, it was just kind of a made up bird. And Redskins is more cool, tough (inaudible) to associate those with athletics. Just I don't know to me it fit better, but again I don't have strong feelings one way or the other about (inaudible)

Cohort Three (post 2000 graduates)

Within cohort three, the idea that the new nickname was invented is also evident.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, does the athletic team nickname RedHawks hold any meaning for you?

**I#1:** Um, not really. And I mean I don't like it. Personally I don't know what a RedHawk is. I have heard that it is a mythical animal that the Miami Indian tribe I guess likes, but I just think that it was a market tested mascot because it seems like it’s very safe and very -- and doesn't really have any meaning other than the fact it can sell T-shirts.
Participant number three seems to be indifferent to the name but does point out that she does not know what it is:

I#3: But other than that like I haven't heard of any bad consequences. I think it is a little weird that I've never heard of a red hawk until I heard it at Miami. But to me like I said, it is just a mascot name and it could be anything else and it would be fine with me.

Also seemingly indifferent, participant number ten, when asked if he had any feelings toward the nickname RedHawk, stated:

I#10: Feelings, it's an animal mascot. I don't particularly say, oh, it is -- Miami was not my undergraduate school so I don't necessarily maybe have the same sort of loyalty as I did my undergraduate college where I competed as an athlete. And, but -- not really positive and not really negative. I consider it, you know, the mascot of the university where I once worked.

Later in the interview when asked does the athletic team nickname RedHawks hold any meanings for him, he stated:

I#10: Meanings in particular, a red bird. It is what identify the university with it is what identify the nickname with. And in that sense it has meaning to me and my experience there within the athletics teams, but besides that, not any other particular meaning. I mean you could probably go into a little greater depth of analysis and you know hawks are usually associated with some sort of Native American, American Indian terminology, you know. But that's not my immediate thought when it comes to mind.

The second theme, It’s Invention, is about the stories study participants told about the process of choosing the new team nickname. It’s Invention conveys the question, was the new nickname fictive or was it borrowed from an animal that truly exists? For some, their whole objection to changing the nickname from Redskins to RedHawks was due to their feeling that RedHawks were not real. In fact, during the interviews some study participants were certain that RedHawks were not real, while others wrestled with whether or not they were real and asked me what it is, is there such a thing as a RedHawk? Clearly the notion that It’s Invention meant different things to the different study participants.

Theme 3- Erasing Tradition

The third theme that emerged across all cohorts was Erasing Tradition. This was discussed as both a challenge to and loss of history and identity. Loss exists in the converse as well. That is, while some participants viewed removing the Redskins nickname as a loss of
identity, others did not. Perhaps this feel of loss and subsequent longing has as much to do with
the longing study participants had for their own pasts – their college years and what they now
imagine them to be. Some claiming that they held their years dear to them and the Redskins
nickname represented that heritage and tradition for them. In addition, some felt the loss was
about “a tradition” (something the school always had and not necessarily tied to athletics) and/or
a loss for the athletic program (i.e., loss of a winning record). The theme Erasing Tradition is
both related to and distinct from the previous two themes.

Cohort One (pre 1993 graduates)

When asked how he would explain some people being very attached to the Redskins
athletic team nickname, this was his response:

I#2: And so I don't think it is hard to understand why they became attached to it. I mean
this is their college experience, this is -- this embodies -- the sports team embodied what
they experienced as a college student. And those are incredibly potent memories. I mean
they are memories and experiences that are remembered that last your entire lifetime. I
mean, just look at alumni weekend around here, I mean it is a busy place. You've got
thousands of people who like birds migrating find their way home, right? They come
back home to Miami. This is their home, this is where they probably met their spouse for,
we've got all the Miami mergers. And these are all part of you know the great experience
here at Miami. So I don't, I don't think it is hard to understand why Redskins [became]
such an important name because that was their experience that was their team, that was
their you know, that's who they stood in the stands and rooted for, you know. And in a
way I think that they sort of feel, they feel put off. They feel in effect some ways offended
because how dare somebody challenge what I held so dear? So I don't have any problem
understanding it, you know. I just think that there's another side to this that a lot of
people don't actually see. And that's the important part.

Along the same lines of identity and history, the idea of tradition came up within cohort one. For
participant number six this was especially evident. Early in the interview, when asked what
meanings the athletic team nickname Redskins held for him he responded:

I#6: It represents a tradition of many years and a special connection to the university.

After alluding to the idea of tradition throughout the conversation, I asked him to elaborate and
when doing so, the participant responded to the question with an answer that repeated the word
tradition seven times.

Interviewer: Okay. You spoke a little bit of tradition, I heard you say that word. And
that's -- people have different kinds of meanings for that. Can you elaborate a little bit
more on what you mean by that?

**I#6:** Well I think, I mean it is not a hard leap to make that so much of Miami University is rooted in tradition. The school was established in 1809 and it is something like the 7th oldest university in America. So there's a lot of tradition at Miami University. It seeps into everything that I can remember about it...Again so I think of the infringement and changing the name as an assault upon the tradition of Miami University when they chose the name. So, again I think it’s important that we all have tradition. Tradition doesn't mean it is not progressive. It just means it anchors you in a different (inaudible) and that's what tradition means to me at Miami University. ...I made it back to homecoming and never missed a year. Oh, yeah, absolutely just because I like coming back to the school. So, in tradition I found my strongest friends in life at Miami University. I hold that very close to me.

A few questions later:

**Interviewer:** Do you have any emotions surrounding Redskins?

**I#6:** Yeah, it embodies the university. It is the university's link to heritage and tradition.

Participant number four echoes a similar sentiment when asked the same question about what meanings does the athletic team nickname Redskins holds for him:

**I #4:** Well, it was a great tradition over the years at Miami...In the 70's[and] 60's, we had a great tradition. We were the cradle coaches for football and a lot of very competitive basketball teams, and we had student athletes.

**Cohort Two (1993- 1999 graduates)**

Within cohort two, the third theme also emerged. For participant number fourteen, he describes the removal as a loss of history:

**Interviewer:** Okay. Do you think there's been any consequences either positive or negative of the change?

**I#14:** Yeah, I think the only thing that I can maybe see as a negative is you don't really -- you don't probably have people inquire as much about the Miami history as far as the Miami Indian history. It is not in their -- not that it was in their face but I mean if you saw a Miami Indian doing a special dance at halftime at an event, you might be a little more curious about the history of it. But if you have just totally erased any association with the Miami tribe out in Oklahoma and we're just a school called Miami, because we don't want to offend anyone, I feel like they've kind of been lost.

When asked to elaborate:

**Interviewer:** Can you elaborate a little bit more on that like the history, I heard you say the history...
I#14: Well, you asked like what's the negative of having changed it from Redskin to RedHawk.

Interviewer: Right.

I#14: I think the change is probably people care less about the Miami heritage, the Miami connection.

Interviewer: Okay. And you liked that link, that connection, the history?

I#14: I think it was good for people to know. I mean it was trail of tears and all that, it is a tragic thing. And you know it is best for all of us to know that so that we don't make that kind of mistake again. It's best for us to know a little bit about Miami's heritage and why we're called Miami. I think that's just -- education is just -- education of history is always helpful I think so that you don't repeat negative aspects of it.

For participant five, the change was “framed” as being a tradition:

I#5: …or we need to keep things, we need to keep things traditional. It was always like the tradition they would always -- they always wanted to keep the mascot as the tradition of the university.

Interviewer: Okay I'm just trying to double check I'm hearing you. So, tradition, can you elaborate a little a little bit more on that?

I#5: Like what?

Interviewer: You mentioned tradition and tradition holds I think different kinds of meanings you know so I'm just curious as to what you --

I#5: Okay. Well I guess whenever somebody -- people would say we have to keep the mascot because of the tradition of the university. And there was a sense that we've always had this, we should always keep it in that regard even though we didn't always have it.

Cohort Three (post 2000 graduates)

While this theme also emerged within cohort three, it was discussed somewhat differently. Participant number one discusses what he claims is the loss of history.

I#1: So, I like the aspect that it reminded us of a group of people that need to be remembered, but I didn't like the way that the name was removed from all historical consequence.

Interviewer: Okay so if I'm understanding you right, you are saying that it maybe something to the effect of honoring some type of people. So can you elaborate a little bit more on that?

I#1: Yeah, people felt that it honored the Native Americans. I don't think it does, but that being said I was around that so much as a 18, 19, 20 year old that looking back on it even now I can see what people mean and the benefits of the nickname, which were slim, were the fact that it reminded us that there were Native Americans living there and maintain that kind of tradition. Obviously the name Redskins needs to go, but I think maybe try to incorporate some other aspect might have been nice.
Participant number nine believes he can get the history of the Miami tribe, who no longer inhabit the area in Ohio where the campus is located, via boy scouts:

**Interviewer:** So a couple of things that you said that I just want to make sure I'm hearing it right a little bit. You said you had some ties with the people from the Miami tribe?

**I#9:** I was in the local Boy Scout Troop and one of the merit badges you could get is Indian Lore. And so we went through the merit badge. And so the Miami Indians aren't around this area generally, but they have history still here we could go see. So when we did our Indian lore study we made sure that it was directly related toward the Miami tribe.

**Interviewer:** And that was while you were here on campus, when you were in school?

**I#9:** That was when I was in high school.

Participant number ten added this when asked if there was anything else he had not talked about:

**I#10:** I think there are multiple levels of looking at this. You know there is the overall national perspective of, you know, schools in general changing their names and changing their mascots. And is the reasoning behind it whether it was truly because they didn't want to promote derogatory and discriminatory name or whether it was to avoid punishment and regulation. And looking at it from that standpoint, I think that there's also certainly another level of understanding these changes and the consequences in the particular context of Miami and the student body and the history that goes along with it, not just from a tradition in the overall Miami standpoint, but specifically when it comes to the history of the athletic department when you're talking about a school that prides itself on its history as being the cradle of coaches. You know we pride ourselves that...you know recent athletes that have made it pro. You know really it's still known as the cradle of coaches. And when you embrace that history as part of your identity, you know, it is very hard to change that mascot. And it has significant consequences financially. I think too as sort of a group identity standpoint of people who associate themselves with that.

Participant number eight, who identified herself as Native American and white, has a different view about history and identity she uses much more powerful words to discuss this concept:

**I#8:** I think that it is a very positive change just because I have such issue with that word and I think that there's so much historical trauma that's associated with the use of that word and I just don't think that having that used as a mascot is appropriate for anyone in any situation. And so just to help native peoples get over seeing that word and having that such a present thing in athletics and sport teams to me is a very good thing that it got removed. From the historical perspective, you know, in terms of messing with the alumni, I mean I just don't -- honestly I could care less about what the alumni in certain respects because they are not the ones that have connection to that word in the way that my people have been historically traumatized by that name. So I really could care less about their feelings, that's how I feel.
As noted, another example of the way that changing the nickname was *Erasing Tradition* related to what some perceived as its effect on the winning tradition of Miami athletics, specifically men’s sports (and in particular football, basketball and hockey). However, as the quotes below indicate not all participants thought about this in the same way.

**Cohort One (pre 1993 graduates)**

Both participant number four and six discuss how they think the name change negatively affected the athletics at Miami:

**I#6**: Yeah, when they changed the name I think sports athletics went down the tubes.

**I#4**: I didn't stop giving the university because they changed the school mascot name, but like I said I'm not a big fan of the -- if they won on the football field consistently and basketball, they could keep the RedHawks name and I would be fine. I guess I'm probably obviously more disappointed in the level of performance that Miami's having in athletics other than hockey. I can't complain about that.

In a separate comment, participant number four elaborated:

**I#4**: At the end of the day I really don't care whether it was Redskins. I mean if that group didn't feel that they were being, weren't being particularly respected I wouldn't have had a problem whatsoever. It just seemed to me, the reason I didn't like it because I felt it was some do-gooder professors who were creating a controversy that at the time really wasn't evident. But again it wouldn't affect, as I said earlier, this wouldn't affect my decision to contribute to the university or support their athletic programs. You know, I do think Miami, I think the mascot is far less-- far less of a factor in the sport by alums of their athletics than -- I just think it's not an emphasis. I think sports at Miami, you're a student I don't know if you agree with this, I don't think they are heavily emphasize. Here they have the number one hockey team in the country most of the year and I saw no marketing. There's just no marketing of it anywhere. And I mean I went to a game this year and there really wasn't full, sold out. So I almost have to think either their marketing -- athletic marketing department is very incompetent and has been for 25 years or it must be the board of trustees level on down has decided we are not going to emphasize sports. We'll go out and support it, but we are not going to heavily market, we want to be perceived as an academic university. I think the mistake there and I know I'm getting way off track, the mistake there is I think often times you really -- success athletics triggers a lot of alumni support and I think involvement and engagement and I think without that engagement it really affects you know a lot of things in terms of the long-term continuity of the success of the institution. So, I don't know the real answer to that whether it truly is a strategy to deemphasize, I have to think it is though. So no matter what the name is I think until you have a more marketing and support and
success, you're probably not going to get much buzz one way or the other no matter what they are called.

When discussing the current athletic scene at Miami University, participant number two in the first cohort stated:

**I#2:** But, you know, I know when I go to the football games I don't know that it really has to do with this issue of RedHawks versus Redskins or not, I still hear a lot of Redskins fans in the stands who sit around wearing Redskins gear and they are saying go Redskins. And they tend to be my age or older. But I don't think the drop in attendance that we have seen in the last few years is attributable to that, at least at football games. I don't know what it is attributable to other than the team hasn't been doing as well as it did say seven or eight years ago. But, you know, I am concerned about that. I don't like the fact that when I go to the games I look across at the student side of the field and you know maybe there is twice as many students as there are band members, but that's still hardly anybody. It is just terrible. And I don't know what, I don't think that has anything to do with the name change. I don't know how it would, these students are too young to remember that. It has to do with some other aspect of the culture here on campus with respect to at least football. You know, obviously the hockey team's got the culture thing down with the students here, but whether that can be attributed to just winning, I don't know, maybe so. But it would be nice to see the stands filled. I don't know how much it has to do with the name change.

Cohort Two (1993-1999 graduates)

Within cohort two, the idea that the nickname change may have had an effect on athletics and the tradition of success was also discussed. Participant number eleven responds to a follow-up question:

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you like the tie from the name of the school with the tribe?

**I#11:** Yeah, and well the history with the sports teams. You know Miami's had strong athletics or had strong athletics, they have been pretty bad recently. And those teams, you know those former teams were tied to the Redskin name. So, the athletic tradition and the school tradition.

In a separate comment he elaborates on the idea that people will come to watch if the teams are good regardless of the name:

**Interviewer:** The change was made [during your] college time, you know, so I was curious, talk about these experiences with this change with change mid-tide. Did that have any kind of effect on the way you saw the school? Or like you said -- you just said it didn't really affect how much you want to the games or anything, but...

**I#11:** No I still went to, you know, still went to the football or basketball or hockey games as much as ever before. So it didn't impact that. And we had really good sports teams
when I was there. One of the years football was ten and one and then we went to the sweet 16 with basketball, and the hockey and, you know, the playoffs every year. And so we had good sports teams so I think the quality of the product they were putting out was part of the reason that it didn't impact attendance as much as well. If you had that same thing happen with the teams now they had football one and ten last year, the basketball team is about five hundred, you know, they got kicked out of the MAC tournament. They haven't been in -- so the quality of the product the sports teams are putting out now is not the same.

Interviewer: Okay.

I#11: I think it would have -- it would have been more pronounced but since they still had strong athletics at that point in time there wasn't as much of a fall out because people still wanted...

Interviewer: Okay. So, if I'm hearing correctly if the teams weren't very good at the time there might have been a larger issue with it?

I#11: There might have been, yeah.

Interviewer: So it might be tied to people are interested in going to the sports if they are good?

I#11: Yeah, I think case regardless of what the name is-- they don't care what the name is as long as you have good athletics. It is going to draw people there.

Interviewer: Because they're going to come to the games anyway?

I#11: Sure, yeah.

Interviewer: But it may have helped the timing?

I#11: The timing was good in that they did it while they had good teams, yeah. Because there wasn't any fall off I think in attendance or anything. If you already have impaired attendance because you have a bad team and then you do something like this with the name, it might even go further would be my impression.

Interviewer: That seems to be something that I had never thought about in terms of teams. Since I wasn't there when it happened I didn't know what the teams were like.

I#11: We had good sports teams. The football team I think lost one game, the basketball team was sweet 16 basketball, it was a big deal. And hockey's been big there forever and still is. And the hockey team you know they are in the playoffs every year and had big games at the old [ice arena] that was -- they were the three big sports and they were well attended. I think there has been a fall off in the quality of the product of the sports program is putting out now compared to that.

Interviewer: Yeah, so people are going to go to the teams if they are good anyway regardless of what the name is?

I#11: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's a little bit of a generalization, but in terms of your feelings on it during the time period that it was changing you, came in as a Redskin and [then it] changed midway through to RedHawk but they were good teams, so you were going to go anyway?

I#11: Yeah, sure.
Participant number twelve also discusses how the name change could impact athletics. He echoes the sentiment that people will go to the games regardless of what the team nickname is if the team is good.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there [have] been any consequences either positive or negative of the change?

**I#12:** I don't know. I am curious if early on it impacted their ability to raise funds for the university because people were diehard Redskins and you know, but I would have hoped not so, you know, but I really don't know. You know has it impacted people going to sporting events? You know, I don't know. I think probably from just a little bit prior to the time I went there I don't think Miami's ever been able to attract a large fan base as sporting events. Part of that has to do with where they are located in relative to other options in terms of, you know, college athletics. UC, Xavier they are in or around downtown Cincinnati is a larger group of people to draw from so people that not only were alumni, but also just those in and around the City of Cincinnati are more inclined to go to an event like an UC or XU event versus Miami just because it’s a little more of a rural setting. So I don't know if it had anything to do with it. I don't think that sporting events were heavily attended prior to that.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you think it’s more a product of perhaps the athletic teams and the availability and accessibility of the athletic teams versus the mascot in terms of people attending?

**I#12:** Yeah, I do. Yeah.

Cohort Three (post 2000 graduates)

Participant number thirteen discusses how she thinks that athletes get the same motivation to play regardless of the team nickname (some punctuation was added to this response for clarity purposes):

**Interviewer:** So, if you didn't think there -- you didn't think there [were] a whole lot of negative consequences, why not? Why would you think there [weren’t] a whole lot of negative consequences?

**I#13:** I don't think we changed...anything about the university. You know when you think about the Redskins/RedHawks, it is about Miami University’s athletic team. It didn't change who they were. It didn't add that as the Redskins... it wasn't like it was something they -- that made them better -- in my opinion they could find the same kind of motivation from being the RedHawks that they did the Redskins...I don't know, it just didn't seem like it changed that much in their attitudes or it could have changed it that much. It was an easy transition...

The third theme, *Erasing Tradition*, dealt with the idea that the change was a challenge to traditions that the school had always had and those traditions were seen as relating to identities and histories. Some participants thought that the name Redskins had been around for the entire
existence of the school (200+ years). The change was viewed as a challenge to their identity and, as a consequence, a loss of history. Although for some participants, that history was viewed much differently, such as those who identified themselves as Native American. Many participants also experienced the change as an assault and related to the decline in the performance of men’s athletic teams after the team nickname changed.

In summary, the three themes presented above emerged irrespective of cohort. Cohort specific themes are presented next.

**Cohort Specific Themes**

This section focuses on cohort specific themes and how the change in Native American team nickname was uniquely perceived and experienced by each cohort. While there was a range of responses within each cohort, I could discern inter-cohort differences. Within Cohort One, the controversy of the change was illustrated. Some of them liked the new nickname, while others emphatically did not. However, what was demonstrated was that the controversy that was created. For Cohort Two, the end of the “Redskins” era meant not only the end of a way to identify with the university and its sports teams, but it also meant a change in the alumni’s apparel (including the meaning of the logos on the apparel). Cohort Two was more likely to be on campus with both new and old apparel available. They perceived it as a confusing and contradictory time period. Of particular interest within Cohort Three were the demographics of Miami University and its climate. The distinctiveness of Cohort Three may have something to do with the racial diversity of Cohort Three that included two participants identifying themselves as white and Native American and one participant identifying herself as African American. These individuals talked about the university’s demographics unlike many of the participants who identified as white.

**Cohort One (pre-1993 graduates) – Controversial**

Participants in Cohort One recalled the change of athletic team nickname as controversial. Although other participants outside of this group perceived the change as controversial, it was particularly resonant and evident in this, the oldest group. Participant number two discusses how when he returned to the campus after he had graduated he realized how big an issue this was:
I#2: I didn't realize when I came back that there had been that much work done on it and was totally unaware there was that much controversy over the whole thing. When I came back I realized there really, this is a really divisive issue, people are really upset about the whole process.

Participant six argues that people who felt offended created the controversy and the situation about the name change:

I#6: So, I mean the university embellishes everything there is about the Miami tribe and to be called the Miami Redskins was honorable and it was tasteful. So, I'm sorry that others feel offended by it but I just think that they take advantage of the situation unnecessarily.

Participant seven explains that older alumni were not supportive of the change and although this quotation discusses apparel, it demonstrates the controversy of the situation:

Interviewer: So do you think there [have] been any consequences either positive or negative of this change?
I#7: Well, I was at Miami not too long ago and I went into the university shop or whatever it is called there to buy a sweatshirt and they had Redskins sweatshirts and I said, Oh, well I thought you know I thought they are not the Redskins anymore, they definitely had some Redskins stuff. And the salesperson said, well we found that we can't sell any sweatshirts to alumni earlier than X year if it says RedHawk. So, which is to say at least within terms of the branded Miami University clothing and hats and all that stuff, there -- anecdotally there was a decrease in sales of stuff once they became the RedHawks. So apparently there's a lot of old Redskin alumni that just weren't going to go there with the RedHawk thing. They just weren't going to make the change and they weren't going to support you know any school stuff that said RedHawk which I think is kind of funny and ignorant.

Cohort Two (1993-1999 graduates) – End of an Era

Cohort Two participants felt as if the nickname change was a marker in time that indicated an end of an era. Some “straddled” the change in that they were on campus when it occurred. In general, the stories they told were not characterized by controversy but were more centered on the changing times. It appeared to many of them that the nickname change signaled an end to a time period where it was allowable to use certain language. This cohort, more so than the others who also discussed apparel, experienced “both worlds” as the new nickname was adopted but the old nickname lingered. As illustrated by the quotes below it was a contradictory time period when apparel, team cheers, what they called themselves changed…and didn’t.

Participant number twelve illustrates this theme:
I#12: Oh, you know, it wasn't anything that honestly I lost sleep about. But, you know, I thought, you know, had my old t-shirts and sweatshirts and stuff and now I had a logo on them that wasn't the logo anymore. You know it was sort of disappointing. And you know I guess at the end of the day I really didn't know if it truly was changed because it was offensive or because there were a couple of people that made waves about it and so we thought it was just — and, you know, it just didn't seem the same, you know, to me Miami we were a Redskin, you know, and it was a RedHawk. It wasn't the end of world.

Later in his interview:

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any emotions surrounding Redskins, the term? Like the nickname?
I#12: Oh, not really. Again I'm probably still am a little fuzzy on my understanding of why they truly changed it other than the reasons I gave above, and again that's my own recollection at the time and what I believe I remembered is the reasons. But as far as, you know, you know, my, you know, that strong feelings about it one way or another, no, not really no. It is just a name, a mascot name.
Interviewer: A mascot name. Okay. Do you have any feelings toward the new nickname RedHawks?
I#12: No, I mean same. It’s fine, you know, it was kind of hard to get used to for a while, right. Yeah, no, I don't have strong feelings one way or another by either.
Interviewer: You kind of have this unique perspective in terms of being in there while it was Redskins, but also graduating at a time period when it was talked about and all that kind of stuff. So do you consider yourself a Miami Redskin, a Miami RedHawk? Do you have any feelings about that? Does it matter?
I#12: Oh, I guess deep down I probably consider myself a Miami Redskin although, you know, I think more than anything I'm just proud to be a Miami graduate regardless of whether they are Redskins or RedHawks.

Participant number eleven goes back-and-forth about which name he identifies with but ultimately decides it is probably Redskin:

Interviewer: What do you associate yourself with? Do you say you're a RedHawk or you say you're a Redskin?
I#11: I don't say. I don't say that. (laughs).
Interviewer: You don't say.
I#11: Yeah, people ask sometimes were you there before or after the name change and all that? I was there in the middle. It's kind of a timeline I guess. It's a marker were you a Redskin or a RedHawk?
Interviewer: Yeah.
I#11: You know, it is kind of --
Interviewer: I was curious because you were kind of straddling it, so which?
I#11: So I have a point of pride that I'm still a Redskin. I don't know that I'm still a Redskin.
Interviewer: You came into it and it had Redskin --
I#11: At least I was there for a little bit as a Redskin. Those youngsters are all RedHawks.

Participant number fourteen discusses the change in terms of his student athlete career where he spent most of his time as a RedHawk. However, he still remembers being one of the last athletic team that could use the Redskins name before it was retired.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any emotions surrounding the team nickname Redskins?
I#14: Not really I mean the -- we were RedHawks for most of my career and I got kind of used to that. I mean if I hadn't been on one of the latter teams to ever be called a Redskin team I probably would not have even think about it. The only time I ever mentioned that I was a Redskin because the track team finished up the end -- actually a month after school was out so we were one of last teams to be under the name Redskin, but if that hadn't been the case I probably would never even think about it.

A few questions later in the interview:

Interviewer: Maybe some informal discussions as people were talking about it, so it was something that was talked about?
I#14: I would say, as far as amongst my track teammates and my coach, the only real discussion that we had is hey this is kind of cool, we're the last ever team, one of the last ever teams I can't remember if baseball, they might have finished a week before us so it was either us or baseball team, we were the last once to ever be Redskins. I do remember kind of having that discussion in our coach reminding us of that.

Cohort Three (post-2000 graduates) – You Have to Understand the Context of Miami

Participants in Cohort Three experienced and perceived the change in athletic team nickname as being intertwined with the changing diversity and demographics of Miami University. They seemed to be acutely aware of the discourse of diversity (i.e., both its promise and perhaps its lack of execution) while they were in school and placed the nickname change in this framework. For example, participant number ten discusses the demographics of Miami University:

I#10: Well, I think part of it you have to understand in the context of Miami University. It is from a demographic standpoint, you know, even though it has the tradition, you know, that the school is adopted the Miami tribe as you know sort of their host with the Miami River and everything there, you know, being located relatively in that region. You know and then the demographics of Miami University being so different. I'm not sure what it is today exactly, but I have never been on a campus that that was as, let's say as white as Miami University was. And you know it is one thing -- and you know the small
diversity that was there was also not very-- the diversity was not very diverse as well I guess would be the best way to describe it. And so you know you have a lot of students that come from very homogeneous backgrounds in the sense of economically, in the sense of thought, and their experience with other cultures, appeared to be fairly limited. And so understanding that as the context of what Miami University is I think it was easier for me to understand why students don't -- didn't get it in some senses.

Participant number one discusses his interactions with two African American co-workers in the athletic department:

I#1: As you know Miami is not the most diverse school in the country, at least it wasn't when I was there. I don't know if the numbers still bear out that way. They really helped me with understanding on top of that Sherman Alexie speech and learning sociology and then my minor in comparative religion, they helped me understand a little bit more about the minority aspect of the nickname Redskin… we would talk sometimes about minority groups and how they are treated. And he was always able at least for me bring it back to the nickname and how offensive he found the nickname and he also let it be okay for me to feel like, because I was offended by it but I didn't realize. You know what I mean? I call it white liberal guilt.

Participant number eight discusses the historical context for the word Redskin:

I#8: But just to see the bookstores and alumni still refer to that and still thought that it was an acceptable symbol and were angry that often times there had been change really kind of hurt my feelings and made me think that, well, you guys obviously don't understand the historical context behind this word and behind the negative impacts that it has on people. And to me that's just a really offensive way to be thinking about the world.

Is it Cohort Three, Racial Identification and/or Critical Consciousness?

As mentioned, within Cohort Three there were three participants who identified themselves as white/Native American (2) or African American (1) and they discussed their experiences of the nickname change differently than the many of the white participants. While white participants are not a homogeneous group with regard to their responses, I think these three racial minority participants offered a unique enough perspective to be discussed independently. At the same time it must be acknowledged that one participant in cohort one who identified as white also shared this perspective. Thus, it is difficult to pinpoint just what created these four individuals’ perspective. It may have to do with the time period during which Cohort Three was on campus, it may have to do with racial identification, and/or as demonstrated by the white
participant in cohort one, it may be due to a critical consciousness. Participants ten and eight (cohort three) stated that if the decision to remove the nickname had not occurred, they would have thought twice about attending Miami University. For example, participant number ten, who identified as white and Native American, discussed his decision to attend Miami University:

I#10: I knew -- I can't remember the exact date of the change to RedHawks, but you know I probably would have had, I don't know if it would have changed my decision to come to Miami, but I would have definitely given it some consideration had they still been the Redskins, I would have had a significant problem with that just simply based on some of my own, you know, personal identity, I don't think I would have wanted to participated as much. Would it have stumped my decision? Maybe not, there were a lot of positive things about Miami and the program that I was going into that I really enjoyed. But it certainly would have weighed heavily against those positive factors.

Later when asked if he had any emotions surrounding the name Redskins, he stated emphatically:

I#10: I find it completely offensive and you know it is a horrible term and the history of it and the history of its use I don't understand. I mean I do understand politically and historically how the name can be used and you know going [back], and politically today how it still can be used for a national football league team. I think it is awful that it is. And I am personally offended by it. And I am very sad and disgraced that teams or any university would try to take the Redskins or any types of names like that forward.

Similar to number ten, participant number eight also discussed her college decision:

I#8: Um, I was paying attention to the things...I knew that [the] school in Ohio was apparently changing their mascot. And then when I got information about the school learned more about it, and I thought Oh, yeah, wow, they really did change. So, I remember hearing about it and putting it in the back of my mind and hope that's they would make the change. Once they did that was fairly easy for me to say yes, I can go to their school.  
Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that people you know in your same year or close to your year had any kind of sense of this or it didn't matter to them that they came in as RedHawks? I know you can't speak for other people, but just your sense of it.
I#8: Um, from my sense I don't remember people really being angry or upset or concerned about the change. I mean I think that it was very well accepted at that point. You know people were just like, yeah, whatever, we don't care. But I definitely, you know, back then was like woo-hoo, like the school changed, that's awesome. But everybody was kind of like okay, whatever.
Interviewer: I just kind of have a wrapping up one if there's anything else regarding you know the athletic departments use or change of the name that you haven't really had a chance to talk about or anything you think might help me understand the topic a little bit better that you haven't been able to talk about?
**I#8:** I have done a lot of research and so much of my career is dedicated to like the explaining how Native Americans really are living today in this world. And so I think that the use of Native American mascots and the betrayal of them in the media is often so derogatory and so offensive and just contributes to the stereotypes of native people. But I'm incredibly happy for the school and the athletic department for changing that. And so removing that from their image of the school. To me it makes the school much more acceptable and open-minded. And to me it is a little bit easier to call myself an alumni of the school knowing that they did make that change and that was part of something that was important to them.

**Interviewer:** Um-hmm, um-hmm. Okay, so if I'm hearing you correctly, you kind of, would you be willing to say you had a pride in Miami for doing that?

**I#8:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** It would have been hard for you to say I were alumni if they had this name still?

**I#8:** Um-hmm, yes, absolutely. I probably would not have gone to that school had they still had it as Redskins.

Participant number thirteen discussed her experiences with diversity or lack thereof at Miami University and how this may have played a role in her experiences with the athletic team nickname. When asked if there was anything else she wanted to add that was not discussed in the interview she stated:

**I#13:** Well, in my experiences for the most part were good experiences. I never had anything negative happen. But -- but I understand that being at Miami, being at Oxford was a different experience for me with different ideas and different types of people. So I came in with an idea that a lot of the people in the area were going to be resistant to change. I saw some of that, but I saw some good stuff as well that surprised me. So when that came up I felt like I came in at a good time to Miami because it seemed like, and I'm saying seemed because I haven't really kept up with Miami since I left, but it seemed like it was moving in the right direction with people meeting different people. And I remember at my orientation they told me so many people have never, actually really in their lifetime met an African American person which is quite surprising. So I knew it was a different environment, but it just seemed to be moving in the right direction and that was one of the first, it was a huge step that they were making to change the name because it was offensive. I was like okay. Somebody over here is speaking about that and what that says about them, about Miami, to the rest of the country. So that was a good move in my opinion. But, no, nothing negative, nothing hugely impactful as far as the name or anything goes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So just if I'm hearing you correctly you seem to have a pretty positive experience with that?

**I#13:** Pretty positive, yes. I would say overall it was a pretty positive experience.
Interviewer: And can you just elaborate a little bit more, you said you were kind of surprised that Miami University did this? I think I understand what you mean but I want to make sure.
I#13: Well I was surprised because the idea was that these people who were going to be sort of one track focused, very resistant to change and it was a big move. I say it is a big move because you know changing your name, are you changing your identity that's huge, especially because it is offensive. So that was huge in my opinion and I didn't expect that from them, so I didn't expect that they would make that move -- especially for Native Americans, you know it is like okay, that's a small population, this is a big university you know, big time university is going to make that move? But they actually did. So...
Interviewer: Would you be willing to say that it kind of made you kind of proud of Miami University for doing that?
I#13: I would say pride, I was proud of them for doing that, yes.

Interviewer: I'm not trying to put words into your mouth, I'm just trying to understand what you are saying because it sounded like you kind of had this expectation that they would be resistant but then --
I#13: It was sort of like a pat on the back, if you will.

Participant number two from cohort one (the oldest cohort) who identified as white was the exception among those study participants who were white in terms of discussing the demographics of Miami. Further, he reported personally knowing Native Americans and may also be influenced by his discipline and field of study. He had this to say:

Interviewer: Does the athletic team nickname Redskins hold any meanings for you?
I#2: Just negative.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate a little bit more?
I#2: Well, I'm speaking for myself and again as someone who knows Native American people personally in a wide range of different contexts. And so I think it is to me I can't help think of the name in terms of the reactions of my friends and people I have known from the Native American communities of one sort or another. And I really don't know anybody that I have met in the years that I have had this consciousness about Native American subjects that would be comfortable with. And most of the people who I have talked to about it and have disagreements with feel very strongly about Redskins. I have never met a single one that has a Native American friend, that actually knows and works with or spends anytime with Native American people of any kind. So I think it is a problem of personal knowledge. I think when you know people who are offended by the term it makes a difference in the way you look at it. If you don't personally know anybody that comes from that particular you know, community who would be offended by it then you don't have the same feelings about it. You know I've often thought, you know, it would be a very different thing if you had you know a dominant white community wanting to name its sports team black skins. You know, that seems very obvious to us, we wouldn't do that. Well, part of the reason it seems so obvious to us is because we have gone through a very visible history of racism with respect to African American people, so
it is conscious, it is right in front of us. But for most people who come from the Midwest, they couldn't even tell you if they have met a Native American. They don't know that the same kinds of intense feelings, you know, are out there...
So if you have never seen that, if you have never grown up with that sort of flippancy and disregard for people's feelings with respect to Native Americans happens, I can understand how the use of the term Redskin may not present a problem for you. But I didn't -- I have too many experiences as a young person for that not to bother me.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, if I'm hearing you correctly. You're connecting it to perhaps knowing a Native American versus not knowing someone which may give you more of a background or a knowledge?

**I#2:** That's just my opinion, I don't know.

Later reacting to a follow-up question, he responded:

**I#2:** You know -- you know we think in terms of diversity on campus, we find that very -- a very important part at Miami. You don't have to be at Miami very long before you understand how important that is to the institution. But when we think of diversity sometimes we think of diversity in terms of the sort of diversity that we see regularly on a daily basis. And we don't have a lot of Native Americans on campus even though we have this very important relationship with the Miami tribe; let's face it, that's not a lot of people on campus every day. So students are not, you know, as daily conscious of that particular aspect of diversity as they might be say with Asian American students or African American students or others who are more prominent on the campus. And so when you have only a few students who represent, you know, a particular community, I don't think it is right there in front of you. I don't think it is something that you consciously think about because it is not, you know -- You know there might be some students on this campus, I hope not, but there maybe who might tempted to say some things about minority students that they don't say because it is present here. They know that this would cause a problem, they would be in trouble. But when there's a situation where it is not so present, it is not -- you know the minority voice is not so close to your ear, you can kind of you know pretend as if -- I shouldn't even say that, it is not that they pretend, it's just that they are not aware that somebody might you know hear something that would be offensive. And sometimes I would think that there would be students that wouldn't even know that a particular set of terms might even be offensive to a particular minority group because if you don't know them, you don't know what offends them.

Presented in this chapter were the results of the thematic analysis. The quotations that provided evidence for the themes that were constructed were reported. A discussion of the results will be presented next.
Chapter Five
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of three different cohorts of Miami University alumni concerning the removal of the Native American athletic team nickname from the intercollegiate athletic program. As followed from the literature review, most of the existing research focuses on whether having Native American imagery creates stereotypical depictions and ultimately contributes to racism. I was unable to find much scholarship concerning perceptions and experiences surrounding a college or university dropping a Native American team nickname, and specifically how alumni associated with the university respond to this change. University alumni seem to have a stake in the removal of Native American team nicknames at various schools and colleges that sponsor athletic programs, yet this population is not usually studied regarding this issue. This project investigates their reactions.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with fourteen participants representing three cohorts yielded three themes It’s P.C., It’s Invention, and Erasing Tradition. Cohort specific themes also appeared; Controversial, End of an Era, and You Have to Understand the Context, including how the change personally affected members. Both similarities and differences are examined here. A discussion and interpretation of the themes follows.

It Must Have Been Activists

One of the dominant narratives about why the university changed the nickname was that it was no longer politically correct to have such a team name. This was evidenced in the first theme, It’s P.C. Eleven out of the fourteen participants mentioned or discussed this is some capacity, irrespective of cohort. In fact, political correctness permeated how study participants made sense of the change—though there was some variation in how this was discussed (i.e., change was due to political correctness/pressure vs. change was characterized as political correctness) and there were multiple meanings associated with the term politically correct. However, it is a term that was not used positively by many of the participants.

The term “political correctness” has come to mean many different things to different people. Although the term was used prior to the 1990s (starting in the 1960s with the Black Power movement then pertaining to feminism and sexuality in the 1970s and 80s) it seems to
have become popular and widely used after it appeared in the media when discussing multicultural education, college/university campuses and professors. In that context, it reflects an adoption by the conservative Right to discredit the Left in the culture wars (Perry, 1992). This provides a context for the way in which many of the participants used the term and thus in this project, it appears most often as a way to describe a perceived national climate in which language had to be “sensitized” or changed to be more “appropriate.” By this, it appears that some participants were invoking political correctness to mean an unnecessary, heightened sensitivity by groups to language and practices that were, to these participants, once innocuous but are now offensive. For some of the participants, this resulted in confusion and exhaustion—waiting for people to make up their mind about how they should be addressed. Examples of this in the larger national context include those who were previously comfortable calling people “Negroes” or “blacks” found groups preferring, if not demanding, to be called “African Americans” just as “Indians” gave way to “Native Americans” and girls gave way to “women” (for adults). Language can be used as a tool to privilege some and disadvantage other as these examples demonstrate. See, for example, Bonilla-Silva (2010), for an extended discussion about how whites’ use of language reinforces their privilege in a racially stratified society.

Some of the participants told stories about how activists—especially those who were neither students nor alumni—were responsible for creating a climate that challenged the university’s use of Redskins for an athletic team nickname. These “activists” were viewed as people out of touch with the situation or outsiders who did not understand it as illustrated by one participant stating, “I think the name was driven more by administration and external pressures than inside.” Moreover, perceptions varied about the groups to which activists belonged. For some, radical faculty members (those “liberal do-gooder professors”) who were offended by what they viewed as discriminatory practices led the charge in ridding the institution of such practices. Others blamed Native American activists who were viewed as outsiders, meddling in university issues, who brought a petition to the school administrators. Still for another participant, the NCAA was viewed as the instigator and was the reason why the university had to change. Few participants, especially those who were against the change considered the nickname a form of racism and, therefore, necessary to be removed. Rather, they seemed to adopt postures of ambivalence or tolerance, a common practice, according to Bonilla-Silva
for whites in communicative situations surrounding race. As nearly all of the respondents who discussed activists’ responsibility for the name change were white, their posture may be a reflection of their position in the racial structure which, for Bonilla-Silva (2010) is a social structure that awards systemic privileges and benefits to whites over nonwhites. Thus, the realities and stories some participants constructed could be related to their dominant position. Or, perhaps it was hard for participants to discuss racial matters without implicating themselves in racist practices.

In addition, activism regarding Native American imagery has been documented since the 1960s, but none of the participants discussed activism surrounding Native American imagery that occurred earlier than the 1990s. Rather, many of the participants (across all cohorts) discussed the issue of activism as a sign of the spread of political correctness, both of which they trace to the 1990s. That is, some argued that there was little or no concern about the team nickname until the time period when political correctness rose in popularity. Due to the fact that the change that occurred on the Miami University campus happened during this time period, it makes sense that this is how some of the interviewees might discuss it since according to Davis, (1993), the earlier protests did not gain widespread support.

Some participants expressed distaste for the activism. This activism has been demonstrated by various groups such as the University Student Senate and the Faculty Senate, and national organizations such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCIA). This is important because participants appear to trivialize the effort to remove Native American imagery from sports teams. Furthermore, the participants’ dismissal of “activists,” whom they believed were not associated with the university, was displayed by their concern that the university was too quick to give in to the unreasonable demands of those whom they considered uniformed. This was especially true if these activists were perceived as not understanding university traditions or how the name might be critical to students’ identity. Some felt the nickname was a cherished part of their college identity and they seemed to have a stake in retaining Redskins and were certainly not involved with removing it.

For some participants Redskins may not be considered offensive and some even questioned the veracity of the claim that the Miami Tribe actually changed their mind about the
nickname. This was demonstrated by narratives surrounding endorsement from the Miami Tribe. Some of the participants suggested that if permission was given by the Native American tribe, whom the team nickname or mascot represents, it cannot be offensive. Moreover, many participants were aware that the tribe had given its endorsement to the university declaring that the Miami Tribe was happy to allow the team nickname for “as long as the wind shall blow,” yet they seemed unaware of the tribe’s 1996 decision to rescind that resolution. This led to remarks such as, “well I guess the wind's not blowing.” Since most participants did not discuss how the tribe had revoked support in 1996, they could attribute the change to outsiders. But perhaps the tribe’s position was unessential; the university, some participants felt, was entitled to keep the nickname, despite the agitation of activists and the apparent change of heart of the tribe. They may have thought it was unacceptable for the tribe to reverse its earlier resolution that the university could have the nickname Redskins for “as long as the wind shall blow.”

Although some participants appeared ambivalent about the name change or to the new nickname, they still held on to the above-stated beliefs. Some even seemed to become more entrenched. A changing national climate surrounding the acceptability of certain language and practices did not change their attitudes. Even some participants who preferred the new nickname, “RedHawks,” located the change in what many viewed to be the climate of that time period. Moreover, they viewed their “uncorrupted” version of the language as harmless and not directed at members of marginalized groups. That is to say, to them “Redskins” was neither intended to offend nor was it linked in any direct way to Native Americans (at least not present-day Native Americans). Also, even though the athletic team nickname changed, views did not necessarily change accordingly. The removal of the term Redskins did not necessarily make some participants think about the potential consequences of this nickname, such as the reproduction of detrimental stereotypes; they continued to use it and defend it (even if not in university sanctioned arenas). This suggests that simply changing an athletic team nickname does not necessarily coincide with a change in practices if structural changes are not made in addition to the name change.

Many of the participants in this study made use of the politically correct narrative as well as the tactic of tribe endorsement—arguing that the Miami Tribe was in favor of using the team nickname. This represents a common argument used to defend the use of Native American
imagery and it is consistent with Davis’s (1993) and King’s (2002) findings that the critiquing of such imagery by opponents of the use of Native American mascots, and so forth, is often considered a form of political correctness by supporters who seek to retain this imagery. It is worth noting that the themes that emerged from the data were interrelated. That is, when participants were talking about the name being changed because it was politically correct, they sometimes also described the need for invention. It is to this topic that will be discussed next.

**Trivialization: “RedHawks Came out of Left Field”**

Within the theme *It’s Invention*, narratives surrounding the development of the new athletic team nickname were discussed by several participants, albeit in different ways. For some, the whole process of choosing a new nickname, like the decision to drop “Redskins,” was a result of political correctness. That is, they viewed the administration’s choice as, primarily, an effort to avoid offending anyone (especially Native Americans). Furthermore, these participants explained that the university had to invent something (the new nickname) so that no one, or anything, could be offended. In this way, participants (at least those who disagreed with the university’s decision) employed strategies such as trivializing the concerns of those who were offended by the use of Native American imagery and denying the power behind language and symbols. This was best illustrated when a participant stated “Let's just call it the, you know, the Miami, you know, air or something. I mean let's find, we can't offend the air I guess, I don’t know.” This participant made up a nickname called “air” to demonstrate his dislike with the name, “RedHawks” and to render it trifling. Another example of trivializing the movement to remove these names and symbols was when one participant recalled an option for the new nickname as being the “Red Bricks.” Even though he could not remember if it was a joke or a nickname that made the final list of options, this demonstrates a strategy of belittling the concerns of those who want the nickname to be changed. This might be a tactic used by supporters of the nickname Redskins to divert attention away from taking a critical look at the team name.

Considering that one participant said the name “came out of left field” (meaning it was a choice that had no previous support or was something that lacked logic) and others talked about the new nickname in a similar manner, it is important to discuss this tactic of invention. None of the participants who said that the new nickname was invented discussed how Native American
team nicknames and logos were a white invention to begin with (King et al., 2002). That is, they said that RedHawks was a made up and unrelated choice, but did not seem mention that Redskins was also made up. When these mascots, logos and team names were gaining popularity in the 1920s, they were not constructed by Native Americans themselves. Most participants appear to be more comfortable with a set of practices that they viewed as traditional, even as those practices they now embrace were invented for a particular reason. They may also be unaware of the ways in which whites benefit indirectly when these practices are continued.

Oddly enough, a total of ten participants either liked or at least were indifferent to RedHawks as the new team nickname (i.e. did not have strong feelings against it). This demonstrates the sometimes contradictory nature of narratives—on the one hand, some participants made a point to talk about how the change was politically correct, which seemed to displease them, while on the other they actually sometimes liked the new name or were at least resigned to a new tradition.

But it’s Tradition

For the participants who were in opposition to the name change, a common narrative evidenced in the theme Erasing Tradition was that removing the name erased a strong university tradition. They were disappointed that the administration ignored their tradition in favor of something new that was fashionable for the time period (i.e. jumping on the politically correct bandwagon at the expense of a time-honored practice). Illustrative of this was when participants stated that Redskins was linked to the heritage of the university. By this they seemed to suggest that it was an integral part of the school’s history.

Yet, few seemed to realize or at least did not discuss that the nickname was coined in 1928, and it was not used officially until 1931, during a period when many other schools adopted Native American team nicknames and logos (Connolly, 2000). Much like Chief Wahoo was an invention of the Cleveland Indians baseball organization, the Redskin, which represented a unique trademark, was an invention of the school’s publicity director in the late 1920s. One participant reasoned that the name did not create controversy for the entire 200 years the school was in existence, so why, all of a sudden, was it offensive? If it is actually offensive, he further reasoned, someone would have pointed this out 100 years ago. He seemed to be unaware of the protests that occurred well before the official name change in 1997 or that it was a contested
issue prior to the change. For him, the association between the university and the nickname was harmonious until the 1990s when language became sensitized.

Arguably, since the university athletic teams did not have an official nickname for the first forty years of competition (besides unofficial names that were used to describe athletes), the sole purpose for choosing the name Redskins was not likely to honor the Native American tribe that the school was named for, as some participants have stated. Rather, this is a narrative (Native American team nicknames are honorable) that has gained popularity. The naming at Miami University seemed to have more to do with branding and trade marking. This was captured by the publicity director’s acknowledgment from shortly after Redskins was adopted, that the athletic team nickname was chosen to set apart Miami University from the other team nicknames in the region such as the Bobcats and Bearcats. Although he also mentioned that the school was named after the Miami Tribe and it would be a suitable moniker, the nickname gave the university marketing appeal. This was done at a time when mass production and mass commodification created the need for identifying marks including the marketing of products in advertising and also in sport (Staurowsky, 1998). Many participants did not see why others would take offense at historical depictions such as Redskins, and most seemed unaware that these depictions were devised at a particular time for particular reasons. Some participants told stories that the original nickname choice of Redskins was integral to the university’s tradition and bestows honor on both the university and the Miami Tribe; however it was likely a conscious decision to brand the intercollegiate athletic program.

In addition, even the university’s website does not contradict the assertion that the “Redskins” nickname was not adopted primarily to honor the Miami Tribe. Listed under the “Miami Traditions” section of the Miami Football Digital Information Guide (2010), there is an article titled “Miami Nickname History.” The first sentence states “At the request of the Oklahoma-based Miami Tribe, (for whom the school is named) the Miami Board of Trustees voted on Sept. 25, 1996 to discontinue the use of Redskins as the nickname for the University’s athletic teams” (p. 200). Later in the article, it states that the nickname Redskins was announced as a successor to Big Red because that name had caused confusion with the Denison University athletic teams; nowhere does it state that the nickname was chosen to honor the Miami Tribe.
Those who were opposed to the university’s decision to drop Redskins thought doing so severed an important connection—history. One participant suggested the history about the subjugation and removal of Native Americans from local environments, as well as national forcible removals such as the Trail of Tears, will no longer be passed on to those connected with the university. This was thought to be a negative consequence of the name change; some participants explained that students might now care less about the connection to, and heritage of, the Miami Tribe. However, it seems questionable that history can be learned from these nicknames and images because the history that spectators have access to is the constructed one which is narrow, limited and re-imagined. It depicts Native Americans as a monolithic culture preoccupied with aggression. This appears to be at odds with the students’ belief that being able to view the team nickname and associated images might increase one’s interest and perhaps cause viewers to seek out additional information about the Native American tribe for which the school is named. Still, within the theme *Erasing Tradition* some participants reproduced the narrative that these images are honorable and are a way to preserve the history of a forgotten people.

However, not all of the participants thought the nickname should have been retained as a way to preserve the connection between the University and the Tribe. The two participants who self-identified as Native American from Cohort Three had a different viewpoint of the historical role of the nickname. One felt very strongly that she did not care if other alumni were offended, “because they are not the ones that have [a] connection to that word in the way that my people have been historically traumatized by that name.” She argued that she is part of the group being stereotypically depicted and that those who seek to maintain the nickname, without understanding its harmful consequences, are fighting to continue archaic practices that demean and debase Native Americans. Similar sentiments were offered by a second participant when he emphatically stated that he thinks the term Redskin is awful given its history and use. The quaint image that other participants conjured up such as brave athletes who are an important part of the university’s athletic tradition was not how these participants viewed the team nickname; for them it was a painful and derogatory word that signaled oppression, not tradition, at least not a tradition that they want to see repeatedly displayed and unchallenged by the university’s sports fans.
Curiously, some participants associated the nickname with enthusiasm about the athletic programs, suggesting that when a team is successful, it does not matter what the nickname is (although they were probably referring to men’s teams and in particular football). Thus, their concern with tradition seemed to be with the university’s winning tradition; some participants were concerned that the name change may have had a negative effect on athletics. Some went as far as to suggest that the team’s nickname changed the university athletes’ motivation for playing. Although no one explained why an athlete might perform better under different nicknames or how athletic performance and team names are connected, it was clear that for some participants, the Redskins team nickname was attached to a winning tradition while the RedHawks was not. On the athletic battlefield where sport is sometimes viewed as ritual warfare, an athletic team nickname that is presumed to aid in motivation is often favored. Some participants seemed to be upset with the new choice and this was revealed in the ways in which they discussed the name RedHawks. The change was viewed as the University giving up on a nickname that invoked a fighting image for a nickname that was not formidable. This demonstrates the stereotypes inherent in Native American athletic team nicknames—these nicknames represent the ways many European Americans have come to view Native Americans, that of the brave warrior. Narratives suggesting that the Redskins nickname was a more suitable name for the athletes are consistent with Davis’ findings (1993) where particular associations with Native Americans such as brave warriors were prevalent in the mythology of the American West (p. 16). These associations remain prevalent today.

As demonstrated, the negative reactions to the objections of Native American imagery are linked to the backlash against the politically correct movement. That is, for many of the participants, the need for invention surfaces if being politically correct is taken to the extreme, as someone would always be offended by something. According to Davis (1993), people who discuss these images as trivial, quite often still “seem to take discussions about the issue of symbols quite seriously” (p. 19). This was demonstrated by the eagerness to discuss imagery that supporters of the Redskins team nickname conveyed while being interviewed. Also, according to Staurowsky (1999), people who seek to defend American Indian mascots often discuss these images as conscious decisions to celebrate virtues of Native American character, to honor an admirable people, and to memorialize a forgotten people (p. 389). This was also
demonstrated in many of the interviews, especially when discussing the link to history and tradition. However, for those who did not support the old nickname the common arguments used against the use of Native American imagery were also heard. These participants pointed out that Native American imagery contributes to derogatory and detrimental stereotypes. They also objected to the idea that a positive history could be derived from these images and nicknames. These participants thought Native American imagery could be damaging to the University, including its efforts to recruit a diverse student body.

Discussing the Diversity and Demographics of MU

While P.C. and tradition were more salient concerns for cohort one and two (as well as either the created controversy or the signaling of changing times), few of them showed concern for the potential relationship between the University’s use of the nickname Redskins and its relative lack of ethnic and racial diversity. Those who did discuss in detail the demographics of Miami University were primarily from Cohort Three. They, more than their peers who graduated before them, seemed to be concerned about the lack of Native Americans and non-whites at the university. Perhaps participants from earlier cohorts encountered a less inclusive climate that did little to sensitize them to the effects of demeaning stereotypes on groups such as Native Americans, at least relative to the more recent graduates of the university in this study—Cohort Three. This may help to explain why only a few participants in the first two cohorts discussed how they thought that the university’s Native American imagery was offensive which contrasts with Cohort Three where a majority did.

According to enrollment data for Miami University, in 1993 when the public discussions about the athletic team nickname were taking place, total minority enrollment (which includes African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American) was at 5.5% of the student population and of that, 0.2% were Native American. In 1997, when the change officially occurred, total minority enrollment had increased to 7.3% of the student population, and Native American enrollment had increased to 0.3%. This represented a total of 57 Native American students, a total that includes undergraduate and graduate students in 1997 (“Minority enrollment percentage Oxford campus”, 2004). Miami university officials made a conscious decision to step up its efforts to increase diversity around the same time that the nickname was retired. Perhaps a contributing factor to a larger discussion of diversity was the Black Action Movement.
(BAM) that occurred in the spring of 1997. In March of that year, approximately 150 students concerned about race relations rallied outside of the administrative building on campus. This eventually led to a series of meetings with university officials and a subsequent comprehensive plan to increase minority recruitment, retention, and inclusiveness (McNutt & Wetzel, 1998). The increase in the numbers of non-white students may have led to a challenge to the administration, by minority students, to be more inclusive in various university practices. Thus when participants in Cohort Three were in school, Miami was more diverse than in previous years. Miami University has made it clear that there are continuing efforts to diversify the institution as demonstrated by the extensive diversity statement currently on the Office of the President website (Office of the President, 2011). Although some participants may have been unaware of efforts to increase minority enrollment, perhaps inclusiveness and diversity were being discussed more in their classrooms and in university social settings during Cohort Three’s stay on campus, as one participant suggested.

Some participants in the third cohort discussed how Miami should never have had the nickname to begin with and thus it was right to change it. One participant was not willing to go as far as to say she had pride in Miami for the change but said, “It was sort of like a pat on the back, if you will.” She also had personal dealings with classmates who before coming to Miami had little to no contact with people of color and for her this may have signaled a reason why some students did not understand how these images are offensive. Still, as one participant in this cohort pointed out, other students he dealt with considered and perceived Miami to be a diverse institution even though he himself did not see it that way. For him, Miami’s efforts at diversifying the student body were laudable but the university came up short. There was only one member of Cohort One who discussed diversity at Miami, perhaps owing to his position as an instructor whose work in a humanities department critically examines issues of power and ethnic relations. He also had close associates who were Native American. Others who shared his belief that the university was wise to drop the nickname self-identified as having Native American ancestry.

For the participants who wanted to see more diversity at Miami University, the nickname change may have offered the student body a learning opportunity to consider how their actions and language affect other people. That is, it may have been a way for students to consider
different viewpoints as it provided a context to discuss different cultures. If Miami University had more minority enrollment, the student body may have been less inclined to look favorably at the use of Native American imagery and perhaps there would have been a more vocal and powerful opposition about the use of this imagery. Also, having a Native American athletic team nickname would not likely have been viewed as congruent with the University’s effort to increase diversity and minority enrollment because of the detrimental stereotypes it reproduces. As mentioned earlier, two participants stated they would have thought twice about attending Miami University if it continued its use of Native American imagery. This may have had particular consequences given the demographics of Miami University as a whole, as well as the administration’s effort to increase diversity among the student population. As demonstrated by this study, issues dealing with Native American imagery are deeply embedded and complex. Not all alumni feel the same way regarding the University’s use of the athletic team name Redskins and its subsequent change to RedHawks. That is, some participants did not look as favorably on the old nickname as others did. One mediating factor, for many of the participants, seemed to be the time period during which these alumni were on campus.

Implications

This study also has many implications both for the literature and future research. It may contribute to our understanding of alumni’s reaction to an athletic team nickname change as well as our knowledge about the use and endorsement of Native American imagery by former students of a university.

One implication is that many of the participants had difficulty separating the logo/symbol from the athletic team nickname. This is not surprising since the language regarding Native American imagery tends to use mascots, logos, and nicknames interchangeably and sometimes without recognition of the complexity of intersectionality. Thus, future studies in this area should recognize that depictions and words are not independent of each other and intersect to create the complex bundle named Native American imagery.

Since the NCAA policy has been implemented to disallow Native American imagery at sanctioned events by participating schools, it has encountered “endorsement by the tribe” narratives by those who object to efforts to rid their school of these symbols. This seems to speak to issues of “authenticity”—of who gets to decide what is, or is not, offensive. The NCAA
policy states that if permission is given by the tribe to continue the use of Native American imagery, a school can continue to display images and nicknames at sanctioned events such as the Florida State Seminoles. For schools like the University of North Dakota, whose nickname is the Fighting Sioux, the debate continues due to their inability to secure permission from both Sioux tribes (Fitzsimmons, 2011). As this study suggests, even if Native Americans withdraw their support for the use of the nickname/logo, alumni will likely be reluctant to accept this decision—they are unlikely to support the university’s change of nickname. Rather, they may rely on other narratives to resist name changes such as the university is being oversensitive and caving in to a climate of political correctness. That is, there may not be an acceptable reason for the university to change what some see as an important tradition. Without outside intervention, universities and colleges would have continued what some alumni see as a harmonious relationship—one that honors those whose imagery they make use of. This study also suggests that, once the change is made, most alumni will likely, eventually, accept the changed name. While these participants provided many reasons why the university should not have made the name change, most of them seemed satisfied to be associated with the new nickname.

A final implication is that by studying the use of Native American imagery, opportunities may arise for critical analysis of its continued existence. By not allowing this topic to settle into the background, its importance can remain “top of mind” for advocates and activists. According to Staurowsky (1999), “the educational importance of examining Native American mascots stems from the fact that such topics allow for a re-visitation of the power of words, symbols, and images” (p. 388). Thus a challenge to dominant narratives can occur if critical researchers continue to study this topic. Creating and circulating counterhegemonic narratives will not allow the topic to forgo a critical look.

Limitations

This study could have benefited from a more diverse group of participants in order to better understand cohort differences, critical consciousness and/or racial identification. As previously discussed, this was an area that needed more exploration because the small number of minority participants discussed the change differently than all but a few of the participants who shared their critical consciousness surrounding the use of Native American imagery. It was difficult to explore the relationship between minority status and different narratives with such a
small number of minority participants, thus increasing the number may help to understand the extent to which racial and/or ethnic background and experiences play a role in how we construct narratives surrounding Native American imagery. Of the fourteen people who were interviewed, three claimed a different identity than white only and of those three, only one was African American; none claimed Asian American, Latino/a or any other identity. This can be attributed to the sampling technique used—snowball sampling—where initial participants provide contact details about other possible participants. The advantage of this method is that participants can refer you to someone who has something important or informed to say about the topic (Shank, 2006). However, the inherent weakness in this method is that individuals often interact in homogeneous groups, so it is not surprising when their referrals are primarily people who are like them. Since the first participant was a white male, this could have influenced subsequent referrals. Snowball sampling within qualitative research is possibly the most commonly used method but it makes use of natural social networks (Noy, 2008), which can lead to exclusivity.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The present study examined the perceptions and beliefs of three alumni cohorts regarding the removal of a Native American intercollegiate athletic team nickname at one university. A suggestion for future research is to study other schools and universities and their removal of Native American imagery—there may be parallels.

Another opportunity that arose surrounds the idea that people had the sense it is best to change a mascot/nickname/logo when a team is successful. That is, some participants perceived that when a team is unsuccessful, a debate surrounding Native American imagery might contribute to more controversy. This could be explored further with other schools as well as examining if there is a difference based on Division I vs. Division III status. This is something new that emerged from this study that has not received much attention in the literature—the possibility that a team nickname could have an effect on athletics. There were differing views on this. For example, some believed that athletes acquire motivation from many different places so they should be able to still play regardless a nickname, while others believed a Native American team nickname can invoke a fighting spirit and can aid in performance. Thus, for the latter, Redskins perhaps conjures up better motivation for their team’s athletes than a non-aggressive name. Inherent stereotypes in athletic team nicknames are something to explore further.
Finally, something that came up in the data but was completely unexplored was how gender and class play a role in the narratives surrounding Native American imagery. Many Miami University students come from privileged backgrounds which may have had a bearing on their attitudes. It might be worthwhile to see if less-privileged students felt similarly. In addition, there was one example of a female athlete discussing the change in nickname differently than male athletes. Was this an anomaly or is this a more general practice? One might explore the relationship between gender and attitudes toward Native American imagery.

*Final Reflections*

This topic is still relevant more than a decade after the official change of athletic team nickname as suggested by the richness of data and both the eagerness and willingness of people to participate in an interview about the change. During the course of this research process an important event occurred that provides further evidence of the continued relevance of this topic. On November 1, 2010 an article appeared in the university newspaper, regarding the topic of Native American imagery after an incident at the annual Miami University homecoming football game. The episode occurred when a senior undergraduate student was asked to leave the stadium because he was wearing a homemade headdress. In an article titled, “Old mascot, new dilemma,” the student stated that the policy makers should not try to erase past traditions (Graffeo, 2010). This led to the publication of eleven subsequent articles in the student newspaper from November, 2010 to February, 2011 about the topic. This included an opinion piece called “What constitutes tradition?” in which the author pointed out that the nickname has not been around since the inception of the university which contradicts the belief that some of the study participants hold. There was even a timeline of historical dates associated with the controversy in the campus section of the student newspaper—one that was historically accurate relating to dates and corroborating the finding that the nickname was coined in 1928 (Beirne, 2010). Eventually in an article titled “MU plans to phase out Redskin logo,” the reporter announced that the decision had been made to officially end the playing of the “scalp song” at athletic events (Giffi, 2010). The chant, played by the hockey pep band when a player from the opposing team is sent to the penalty box, was originally written by President Alfred Upham as a school fight song and was first sung by the glee club during halftime of the football games (Corcoran, 2011). Although it is not clear that the official reason for discontinuing use of the
scalp song came directly from the incident at homecoming, that incident may have been the
impetus for further investigation of this practice.

"It's time to move on," [University President] Hodge said. "The song was created when
we had a different mascot. It made sense with the other mascot, it doesn't make sense
with the current mascot, and we're trying to create new RedHawk traditions." Hodge said
the song also goes against the image the university seeks to project. According to Hodge,
Miami will likely see future changes as they relate to embracing the RedHawk identity.
One of these could eventually include the removal of the former Redskins logo from all
facilities and paraphernalia (December 9, 2010, p. 1).

Clearly this is still a germane topic for Miami University. More than thirteen years after
the decision to change the nickname, the administration took action once again following a
public incident at the 2010 homecoming game. On December 21, 2010, the decision to officially
end all licensed productions of the logo, depicting a Native American and a block M, was
finalized and it was estimated that remaining apparel would be eliminated by summer 2011—at
least apparel that is officially sanctioned and sold by the university (Bernard, 2011). Yet, even
though the university’s official position is to phase out the old logo, as this project indicates,
there are many who, for various reasons, are unwilling to discontinue its use personally.

This study focused on a retrospective look at the athletic nickname change. The
interviews provide a narrative about the past—something that occurred fourteen years ago. But
this is also much broader than the specific year it changed in 1997. A preliminary reading of the
newspaper articles published in the Miami Student suggests that some of the same dominant
narratives and themes from alumni included in the current study are being told in 2011. These
narratives that were produced recently indicate the need and the opportunity for additional
research on the topic of Native American imagery.


Staurowsky, E. J. (2007). You know we are all Indian: Exploring white power and privilege in reactions to the NCAA Native American mascot policy. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 31*(1), 61-76.


Appendix A

Invitation Letter

Hello,

My name is Jessica Toglia and I am currently a graduate student at Miami University in the Kinesiology and Health Department. I am working on writing a master’s thesis and because of my interests I have chosen the topic of Native American athletic team nicknames for my project.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in my research based on the year you graduated from Miami University. I was hoping that I could interview you because of your unique perspective. Your participation is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for declining. However, there is one criterion for participation and that is the following question:

Do you believe you can talk to me about the use and/or change in the Native American athletic team nickname at Miami University?

If the answer to the above question is “no”, then please disregard my request and thank you for taking time to read this.

If the answer to the above question is “yes”, I would greatly appreciate your help. If this is something you could help me with, please contact me at togliajm@muohio.edu or (###) ###-#### so that we can work out a time that is convenient for you for the interview. This interview (either in-person or via telephone) should last approximately 30 to 60 minutes and will be about your experiences and perceptions of Native American athletic team nicknames. This interview will be audio taped and your name will not be associated with your answers in the final results. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jessica M. Toglia
Department of Kinesiology and Health
togliajm@muohio.edu
Appendix B

Participation and Informed Consent

Dear ____________:

My name is Jessica Toglia and I am currently a graduate student at Miami University in the Kinesiology and Health Department. I am working on writing a master’s thesis and because of my interests, I have chosen the topic of Native American athletic team nicknames for my project.

You are invited to participate in my project. I will ask you to participate in an interview about your experiences and perceptions of Native American athletic team nicknames. This interview will be audio-tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Your name will not be associated with your responses in any way (that is, the information you provide will be used anonymously and grouped with the information of other interviews). The interview in its entirety should take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You will not be asked to do anything that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. The benefit of this project, educationally, is that it will help me generate data for my thesis research, as well as help me understand perceptions surrounding Native American athletic team nicknames.

If you have further questions about this project, please contact me at (###) ###-#### or togliajm@muohio.edu.

Thank you for your participation and for helping me out with my project. I am very grateful for your help and hope that it will be an interesting process for you. You may keep this top portion of the page.

*************************************************************************************************************************************************************************************

Cut/tear at the line, keep the top section and return this bottom section.

I agree to participate in the thesis research regarding Native American athletic team nicknames. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I can discontinue participation without penalty. I further understand that my name will not be associated with the information I provide.

Participant’s Signature ______________________________________________________

Date ______________________________
Appendix C

Background Information

Interviewee #_____  
Graduation Year: ________________

Date/Time/Place:

Sex:  Female  Male

Race: ________________________

Age: ______

Are you a resident of Ohio?

What was your major while at Miami University?

What have you done since graduating from Miami University?

Occupation: ______________________________

Any additional information that might be useful?
Appendix D

Interview Guide #1 (graduation years pre-1993)

1. Can you tell me your involvement with/participation if at all in intercollegiate athletics at Miami?
   a. What have those experiences been like for you?

2. What did you think about Miami University using “Redskins” as its sport nickname?

3. Have your thoughts changed about this now?

4. What meanings does the athletic team nickname “Redskins” hold for you?

5. Are you aware that the athletic team nickname was changed to “RedHawks”?

6. Do you think there have been any consequences – positive OR negative – of this change? If so, how so? If not, why not?

7. How do you explain some people being very attached to the “Redskins” athletic team nickname while others seem not to be?
   a. Do you have any emotions surrounding the team nickname “The Redskins”?
   b. Do you have any feelings towards the team nickname “The RedHawks”?
   c. Has the change in athletic team nickname changed your behavior at all?

8. Do you donate to Miami University?
   a. Has the change had any consequences to your alumni donation either increasing or decreasing?

9. Is there anything else regarding Miami University athletic department using or changing of the athletic team nickname that you have not had the opportunity to say but think that it might help me understand this topic?
Interview Guide #2 (graduation years 1993-2000)

1. Can you tell me your involvement with/participation if at all in intercollegiate athletics at Miami?
   a. What have those experiences been like for you?

2. What do you think about Miami University using “Redskins” as its sport nickname?

3. Were you aware that the University had public discussions about the name change?

4. What do you think about the University-led discussions about changing the athletic team nickname?

5. Do you remember hearing or seeing anything in particular when the team nickname was changed? What are you memories of how people reacted to this? Can you tell me about those memories?

6. How did you feel about the change?

7. How do you feel about that change?

8. Do you think there have been any consequences – positive OR negative – of this change? If so, how so? If not, why not?

9. How do you explain some people being very attached to the “Redskins” athletic team nickname while others seem not to be?
   a. Do you have any emotions surrounding the team nickname “The Redskins”?
   b. Do you have any feelings towards the team nickname “The RedHawks”?
   c. Has the change in athletic team nickname changed your behavior at all?

10. Do you donate to Miami University?
    a. Has the change had any consequences to your alumni donation either increasing or decreasing?

11. Is there anything else regarding Miami University athletic department using or changing of the athletic team nickname that you have not had the opportunity to say but think that it might help me understand this topic?
Interview Guide #3 (graduation years post-2000)

1. Can you tell me your involvement with/participation in if at all intercollegiate athletics at Miami?
   a. What have those experiences been like for you?

2. Have you heard or learned about the history of the athletic team nickname?

3. Does the athletic team nickname “RedHawks” hold any meanings for you?

4. Do you think there have been any consequences – positive OR negative – of this change? If so, how so? If not, why not?

5. How do you explain some people being very attached to the “Redskins” athletic team nickname while others seem not to be?
   a. Do you have any emotions surrounding the team nickname “The Redskins”?
   b. Do you have any feelings towards the team nickname “The RedHawks”?
   c. Has the change in athletic team nickname changed your behavior at all?

6. Do you donate to Miami University?
   a. Has the change had any consequences to your alumni donation either increasing or decreasing?

7. Is there anything else regarding Miami University athletic department using or changing of the athletic team nickname that you have not had the opportunity to say but think that it might help me understand this topic?