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Native American Identity and Cultural Appropriation in Post-Ethnic Reality

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**Abstract:** Not only is the concept of identity a relatively new invention but also it has become an umbrella term including a large set of components that are mistakenly taken for granted. Cultural studies has developed the idea that identities are contradictory and cross-cut. It is believed that identities change according to how subjects are addressed and/or represented. Such an assumption allows for the re-articulation of various and definite components under changeable historical and cultural circumstances. Thus, it may be assumed that identity is something that is created rather than given. Yet in Native American communities identity construction is likely to become more complicated for American Indian identities include not only cultural statuses but also legal ones. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn states that Native American identity quest, as part of tribal nationalism, involves the interest in establishing the myths and metaphors of sovereign nationalism – the places, the mythological beings and the oral tradition. Even though ethnic pluralism and cultural expression help keep various worldviews alive, one should not overlook the issue of various acts of appropriation that result in cultural harm or in a weakened or distorted/misrepresented cultural identity.

**Key words:** Native Americans, identity, cultural appropriation, mythology

The concept of social identity is a relatively new invention, as it only became an essential category of cultural studies during the 1990s. Kath Woodward in *Understanding Identity* not only stresses the importance of identity for it provides "a way of thinking about the links between the personal and the social; of the meeting place of the psychological and the social, of the psyche and the society" but also draws attention to the fact that "how and why it matters depends on time and place and on specific historical, social and material circumstances"(vii). According to Woodward identity is characterized by (1) an understanding of agency – an idea that people have some control in constructing their own identities; (2) some element of rational choice; (3) symbols that typify the ways in which identities are shared; (4) boundaries that establish "the parameters of difference and of sameness"; and (5) psychic investment in the identity that is assumed (ix-x).

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For the most part of human history, forming an identity was a rather clear-cut process. The average person naturally assumed and conformed to the culturally prescribed roles that his or her relatives had themselves appropriated. Those who did not follow this traditional pattern, might have been banished from their community or punished in some way. This situation, as James E. Côté and Charles G. Levine tell us, "was characteristic of premodern societies that spanned the period of human evolution from simple tribal through feudal social organizations" (1-2). They also draw our attention to the fact that when choice replaced obligation as the basis of self-definition, identity formation became a more complicated, hazardous, and solitary process for which many people were not prepared because identity formation did not use to be a matter of personal choice and negotiation. Historically speaking, humans have not been used to living in societies where they are constantly confronted with excessive levels of choice over essential matters of personal meaning. Côté and Levine claim that many people have not developed the necessary means for dealing with a process that allows them to make choices. In other words, "people lack sense of self-definition rooted in a community of others, which was the basis of human identity throughout history" (1-2).

Issues of identity are as fundamental within Native American Studies as they are in Native American communities. One should not overlook the fact that American Indian identities are distinct among ethnic categories in the United States because they encompass not only legal but also cultural statuses. David E. Wilkins tells us that "the federal government recognizes American Indians as enrolled members of a 'federally acknowledged tribal entity,' which is the BIA's term for 'various indigenous groups which are recognized as having a political relationship with the federal government – it includes tribal nations, bands, villages, communities, and pueblos, as well as Alaskan Inuits and Aleuts" (qtd. in Gamber, 175) .

The Code of Federal Regulations of the United States provides the BIA's "Procedure for Establishing that an American Indian Group Exists as an Indian Tribe" with seven "Mandatory Criteria." In short, "these criteria say that a petitioning tribe must: (1) prove a continuous American Indian identity since 1900; (2) comprise a distinct community 'from historical times'; (3) maintain political influence over its members since historical times; (4) provide its governing document; (5) prove descent from a 'historical Indian tribe'; (6) not be comprised of members of other tribes; and (7) not have been previously 'terminated or forbidden the Federal relationship'" (175-176). It appears that providing evidence to meet these mandatory criteria, as John Gamber tells us, is a very challenging task for tribes to do. It is extremely problematic to prove historical continuity

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in a single location or provide substantial documentation of direct lines of biological descent (176).

Furthermore, Indian identity becomes more complicated or even distorted when the legal aspect is omitted. Although the most basic and commonly recognized definition of an Indian person is one who is enrolled in a tribe, according to Gamber, it is not the only method of establishing identity (176). Eva Marie Garroutte writes that "each tribe sets its own legal criteria for citizenship." Garroutte explains further that about "two-thirds of all federally recognized tribes of the coterminous United States specify a minimum blood quantum in their legal criteria, with one-quarter blood degree being the most frequent requirement" (224). The blood quantum, however, is not generally regarded as a historically founded Native practice. "Blood quantum, then, is often seen as a method by which the federal government measures Indians, but as successive generations intermarry with other peoples, degrees of tribal blood are inevitably going to decrease" (Gamber 177). Therefore, with such unreliable determiners for proving Native identity, people often resort to more conventional methods of community belonging. John Gamber claims that "many Native people side with the assertion that Native identity is not so much based on what community and individual claims, but on what community claims that individual. In other words, if the tribal community says you are a member, then you are." (2010: 177)

Native American identity is not only a hotly debated issue in Native American Studies but also it is one of the recurring themes of recent Native American literature. However, one cannot understand Native American Literatures without a clear understanding of mythology. Mythographer John Bierhorst (1985: 2) claims that

mythology does not have the antiquity of geologic ages, but it is nevertheless a very old pattern, woven into the terrain over the course of thousands of years. Each continent – except Antarctica – has its own mythological imprint and will probably never receive another, at least not in the foreseeable future. Viewed at a distance, myths create a luxuriant configuration that gradually changes from region to region. At close range, these same myths reflect the desires and fears of distinct peoples, granting them trusteeship of the land with the consent of unseen powers.

What Bierhorst is suggesting is that there are marked mythological maps that have guided cultures from ancient times to the present.

In more conventional terms, this means that Native Americans have their old and new testaments too. Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo), a Native American poet and

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literary critic, tells us that Native mythologies are "based on a sense of propriety, an active respect for ... Natural powers; on a ritual comprehension of universal orderliness and balance; and on a belief that a person's every action, thought, relationship, and feeling contributes to the greater good of the Universe or its suffering. Human beings are required to live in such a way that balance is maintained and furthered, and disorder (also perceived as disease) is kept within bounds." (qtd. in Lundquist 2004: 3)

In her book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, Allen (1986: 103-105) stresses the importance of understanding the meaning of mythic narrative and the concept of myth itself within a tribal context. She writes that "the mythic narrative as an articulation of thought or wisdom is not expressible in other forms; it must be seen as necessary dimension of human expression, a dimension that is categorically unique." Myth, on the other hand, is not only a statement about how the world is supposed to function but, more importantly, it "embodies a sense of reality that includes all human capacities, ideal or actual." Therefore, one can safely make the assumption, according to Allen, that myth is a type of story that enables a holistic image to permeate and shape consciousness, consequently providing a consistent and empowering matrix for action and relationship. Working on that assumption, Allen claims that American Indian myths depend for their magic on relationship and participation. To put it more simply, one has to participate in mythic magic in order to be able to relate to the myth and understand its meaning on its own terms.

Paula Gunn Allen also draws our attention to the fact that myth is based on visionary experience and the ability to achieve a vision is a mark of maturity. Vision is believed to be a way of becoming whole, of substantiating one's special place in the universe, and myth is one of the ways of confirming vision's place in the life of all people. Even though the vision can be experienced only by one person, as Allen claims, similarly to all aspects of Indian life, it must be shared; so is myth. One needs to bear in mind that myth is a story of a vision. Taking into consideration the fact that myth is a "vehicle of transmission, of sharing, of renewal," one cannot but assume that "myth acts as a lens through which people can discover the reality that exists beyond the limits of simple linear perception." In this way, people can rediscover their true identities. Allen takes the argument further, explaining that "myth functions as an affirmation of self that transcends the temporal. It guides our attention towards a view of ourselves, a possibility, that we might not otherwise encounter. It shows us our own ability to accept and allow the eternal to be part of our selves. It allows us to imagine a marriage between our

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conscious and unconscious, fusing the twin dimensions of mind and society into a coherent, meaningful whole." (116-117)

Allen's point of view seems to be supported by Richard Chase's definition of myth that treats it as "an esthetic device for bringing the imaginary but powerful world of preternatural forces into a manageable collaboration with the objective [i.e., experienced] facts of life in such a way as to excite a sense of reality amenable to both the unconscious passions and the conscious mind." (qtd. in Bruner 1960: 276) Following that definition one may be tempted to assume that "there is an oppositional contrast between logos and mythos, the grammar of experience and the grammar of myth," but one could not be more mistaken, as Bruner claims, "for each complements the other." (1960: 276)

Jerome Bruner (1960: 280), using the conventional psychoanalytic term, claims that myth is a projection, yet he calls it an externalization. Such an externalizing tendency determines a basis for sharing thoughts and feelings between men, so that everything can be named and shared in a manner beyond the sharing of subjectivity. Then, it is possible to share communally internal experience as well as shape a collective matrix of determinism. Paradoxically enough, on the one hand, myth is seen as an externalization, but on the other it is considered to be a pedagogical image. Therefore, myth develops into the guide, the shaper of identities for personality mirrors myth in the same manner as "myth is an externalization of the vicissitudes of personality." Bruner agrees with Joseph Campbell (1973: 382-383) who writes in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, that

In his life-form the individual is necessarily only a fraction and distortion of the total image of man. He is limited either as male or as female; at any given period of his life he is again limited as child, youth, mature adult, or ancient; furthermore, in his life role he is necessarily specialized as craftsman, tradesman, servant, or thief, priest, leader, wife, nun, or harlot; he cannot be all. Hence the totality – the fullness of man – is not in the separate member, but in the body of the society as a whole; the individual can be only an organ.

What transpires here is that mythologically instructed community, as Campbell calls it, "provides its members with a library of scripts upon which the individual may judge the internal drama of his multiple identities. For myth serves not only as a pattern to which one aspires, but also as a criterion for the self-critic." (Bruner 1960: 278-281) One also needs to bear in mind that myth is always associated with a ritual. Joseph Campbell (1973: 383) emphasizes the importance of such a connection when he writes that

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the tribal ceremonies of birth, initiation, marriage, burial, installation, and so forth, serve to translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms. They disclose him to himself, not as this personality or that, but as a warrior, the bride, the widow, the priest, the chieftain; at the same time rehearsing for the rest of the community the old lesson of the archetypal stages. All participate in the ceremonial according to rank and function. The whole society becomes visible to itself as an imperishable living unit. By an enlargement of vision to embrace this super-individual, each discovers himself enhanced, enriched, supported, and magnified. His role, however unimpressive, is seen to be intrinsic to the beautiful festival-image of man – the image, potential yet necessarily inhibited, within himself.

If one should intend to break the connection with the sources of his very existence or leave the community altogether, such an individual, from the stand point of social unit, would be considered a nothing. However, such separation is the first step of the identity quest. (Campbell 1973: 385)

Louis Owens in his book *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (1992: 4-5) claims that the problem of American Indian identity encompasses centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement, imposed peripherality, and cultural denigration. The recovering or rearticulation of an identity is a process reliant on a rediscovered sense of place as well as community. Robert M. Nelson states that identity is an event that takes place not only within a cultural tradition but also a particular landscape. (1998: 267) Paula Gunn Allen (1989: 191) aptly explains it

we are the land. To the best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea embedded in Native American life and culture in the Southwest. ... The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. ... It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is ourself, in as real a sense as such notions as "ego," "libido" or social network. ... Nor is this relationship one of mere "affinity" for the Earth. It is not a matter of being "close to nature." The relationship is more one of identity.

What Allen is suggesting here is that cultural traditions or individual identities are expressions of the experience of coming to terms with the life of that culture's landscape. It is also worth remembering that tradition does not create identity but confirms it. Furthermore, "the process of human spiritual regeneration, of healing, depends on conforming individual vision to the reality of a physical landscape." Thus, "identity with physical landscape precedes cultural re-entry." (Nelson 1998: 274-276)

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From the standpoint of the theory of narrative, the homing motif is crucial to many genres of Native writing. William Bevis (1987: 582) tells us that "in Native American novels, coming home, staying put, contracting, or even regressing to a place, a past where one has been before, is not only the primary story, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good." In practical terms, any Native American novel which employs such a narrative technique tells a story of an individual who has been away from his tribal community for some time returns home and finally discovers his identity by staying. There is also a traditional tribal elder who is treated with great respect, and who triggers the resolution of the plot. That elder is usually a relative, parent or grandparent, with whom the protagonist develops a new personal bond. The ending sought by the protagonist is considerably connected with tribal past and place. This "homing" plot describes "tribal past as a gravity field stronger than individual will." (Bevis 1987: 585)

Surprising as it may seem, tribalism is not just an individual's past and tribe is not just lineage or blood relationship and home is not just a place. "Grounded Indian literature is tribal; its fulcrum is a sense of relatedness. To Indians tribe means family, not just bloodlines but extended family, clan, community, ceremonial exchanges with nature, and an animate regard for all creation as sensible and powerful." (qtd. in Bevis 1987: 585) Therefore, certain grounds exist for supposing that identity for a Native American is not a question of discovering "one's self," but of finding a "self" that is transpersonal and comprises a society, a past, and a place. According to Bevis (1987: 585), "to be separated from that transpersonal time and space is to lose identity." Moreover, the tribal "being," as Bevis tells us, consists of three elements: society, past, and place. The society of the tribe is not just company, it is the law. Consequently, the protagonist attempts to establish a meaningful bond with a meaningful structure; he becomes a healthy man through long-established social ritual and a self-respecting man through deeds traditional to his people and necessary for them. The second constituent of tribalism is its reverence for the past. The tribal community, which facilitates meaning, continues through time and turns to the past for authority. One should not overlook the fact that tribal reality is deeply conservative and the notions of progress and a fresh start are not indigenous to America. Native Americans believe that past is part of tribal authority and culture and therefore part of identity. What is more, the present has no meaning if it is separated from the past. The third element of tribalism, as it has already been stated, is place. Place within Native American context usually denotes the reservation which is not only a place where people are stuck but also it is the home. (Bevis 1987: 586-592)

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Still, one may be tempted to ask, using Erikson's language, how is it possible for a young Sioux Indian to have an extremely motivated and synthesized ego if the core cultural realities of buffalo hunter and warrior no longer exist? It has already been stated that issues of Native American identity are complex not only because of legal and tribal criteria but also they are clouded by images that have been projected onto American Indians. As the Anishinaabe and "crossblood" scholar Gerald Vizenor has pointed out, "the *indian* is an occidental misnomer, an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures or communities; it is a simulation and ruse of colonial dominance." (qtd. in Strong 2004: 342)

Scott B. Vickers in his book *Native American Identities: From Stereotype to Archetype in Art and Literature* (1998: 4) claims that such images can be grouped/divided into two separate categories: one positive being that of the Noble Savage and one negative being that of the Ignoble Savage. According to Vickers, the former category is "1) glamorized as the Noble Savage, representing a lost or vanishing human species deemed worthy of emulation or sustained nostalgia; 2) seen as a harmless, childlike race in need of paternalistic guidance, self-improvement, education, civilization, conversion, and/or patronization; 3) permanently consigned to an idealized past, frozen in history as an artifact who can be appreciated philosophically and aesthetically but who has no present political reality; 4) seen as a good example to his/her people, having been converted and/or civilized by the dominant culture; and/or 5) considered to be a subservient yet honorable character, capable of assisting the dominant culture in the fulfillment of its destiny (the "my man Friday" syndrome)."

The latter category, on the other hand, "1) lacks a recognizable psychological reality, that is, has no motivation for his or her actions, emotional content, coherent thought processes and speech, personality, bodily self-awareness, cultural context, humor, or any "spiritual condition," or soul; 2) does demonstrate any of the above in a negative and only negative connotation, that is, as murderous, rapacious, primitive, one-dimensional, naked, heathenish, wooden, full of gibberish or devilish; 3) is portrayed as "less than human," animalistic, and lacking any conscious or moral motivation; 4) has skin color or racial features that are exaggerated, caricatured, or taken as sufficient to deny him or her human status; 5) has no historical or cultural reality, and thus must be as portrayed by the defining entity, without recourse to self-defense, testimony, or other inalienable rights to an autonomous selfhood; and/or 6) is, by biblical definition or inference, a "child of the devil" and a hostile Other." (Vickers 1998: 5) The point is that such a positive or negative stereotypical representation of Native Americans not only

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may be or is regarded as contributing to their dehumanization and displacement but also is likely to facilitate subject/cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. (Vickers 1998: 5)

James Young and Susan Haley (2009: 268-269) hold that subject appropriation takes place when members of one culture portray members of other cultures or aspects of their culture. Subject appropriation occurs mainly in two contexts. Namely, in the arts, when artists from one culture reproduce aspects of another culture and in the social sciences when researchers explore cultures other than their own. In practical terms, one might think of W. P. Kinsella, a white Canadian writer who has set a number of stories among the inhabitants of the Hobbema Indian Reserve of Alberta; Tony Hillerman, a white American author, whose novels are located among the Navajo; and, Archie Stansfeld Belaney (Grey Owl), an Englishman who emigrated to Canada, assumed the identity of a full-blooded Ojibway and an Apache-Scottish half-blood. Such above-mentioned examples might not be seen as objectionable subject appropriation however they might be viewed as a form of misrepresentation which can be deeply offensive as well. As an interesting side note, it is worth mentioning that Tony Hillerman's novels have been recognized by the Navajo as truthfully representing their culture. He was also awarded the Special Friend of the Navajo award.

There is no denying the fact that misrepresentation has taken place and continues to take place in how the minority cultures are treated in fiction and in film. The Hollywood Indian, similarly to its literary ancestor has taken many forms, but two aspects remain the same, namely, difference and savagery. Rennard Strickland (Osage-Cherokee) has suggested that a general characteristic of the entertainment industry

... is the repetitive regularity of the image in movies that refines and reinforces the societal stereotypes. Hollywood provides an endless parade in which we have "good Indians and bad Indians." In the thousands of individual films and the millions of frames in those films, we have few, if any, "real Indians" who have individuality or humanity; who have families; who lead real lives that differ in marked degree from the lives of other "Indians." Hollywood has tried to squeeze all of these people into these two basic molds. Almost five hundred tribes, bands, and villages are thus reduced to the homogenized film Indian stereotypes. (qtd. in King 2006: 21-22)

King (2006: 22) claims that the movies have created four distinct Indian characters. "First, the noble savage, reflecting Enlightenment preoccupations and romantic ideals, is the child of nature, a spiritual creature, and a proud warrior, endowed with superhuman

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strength, grace, and bravery. Excellent examples of the noble savage include the Lakotas in *Dances with Wolves* and Cochise in *Broken Arrow*." Second, the less noble, but honorable close companion who is willing to help and sacrifice for white heroes. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Tonto of the *Lone Ranger* series exemplifies this character. Third, the ignoble savage "has been depicted as resistant, stoic, marauding, treacherous, amoral, and barbaric. A determined enemy of white settlers and soldiers alike, he is the subhuman counterpart to the noble savage." Finally, it must be emphasized that the Hollywood Indian has been clearly male, "only occasionally giving indigenous women more than a sideways glance, and then, almost invariably as the mythic Indian princess, for example, the title character in *Pocahontas*." One should not overlook the fact that such "cinematic representations of Native American cultures and histories have shaped perceptions, practices, and policies. They have encouraged misrecognition of American Indians, warping understanding of their lives, capacities, values, and cultures. Moreover, such distorted understandings of culture and history continue to justify the conquest of Native America, contribute to denial of genocide, and reject the vitality of indigenous sovereignty." (King 2006:28)

Tressa Berman (2004: 383) states that for Native Americans appropriation originates from "the taking of native land itself, the extinguishment of native title through treaties, and the historical repression of cultural practices through state-sponsored violence and legal sanctions. Cultural appropriation flows from these practices in native North America." Berman also emphasizes the fact that identity can be appropriated. It happens when cultural practices are removed from the locations and social relationships that provide their meaning and power, the core aspects of identity are also eliminated. "Therefore, appropriative practices often result in cultural harm, or in a dilution or distortion of cultural identity. Appropriation occurs when images of American Indians lodge themselves in non-native sign systems where they are assigned new meanings." (Berman 2004: 384)

A telling example of this is the use of American Indian mascots by sports teams. C. Richard King (2006: 53-55) tells us that Native American mascots reduce indigenous peoples to fragments mistakenly thought to epitomize or portray them. "In the world of sports, Indian imagery breaks down the complexities of Native lives as lived, reassembling them through four dimensions: 1) physical features, invariably nose, skin color, or hair; 2) material culture, including buckskin, feathers, and/or headdress; 3) expressive forms, particularly dance and face painting; and 4) personality characteristics

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like stoicism or bravery." Before we look at the particular instances, the significance of some of the dimensions can be observed.

Firstly, a headdress is a symbol of tribal or clan affiliation and of association with specific spiritual powers, the headdress demonstrated the status and wealth of the wearer and suggested the suitable response from others. The simplest headdress was a single eagle feather, a symbol of status among the Plains people. The brave became a warrior after his first killing of an enemy and was allowed to wear the feather. However, one needs to differentiate between a traditional headdress and a war bonnet. In Plains societies, a war bonnet was one of the most valued articles that a warrior could possess. The war bonnet was one way warriors documented their achievements in battle. (Barrett and Markowitz 2004: 348) There were two types of war bonnets: the golden eagle-feathered headdress and the split-horned bonnet. A warrior might make four to five bonnets in his lifetime, each one slightly different from the others. Although the war bonnets were not worn into battle until the result was confirmed, they were always worn in religious gatherings. (Barrett and Markowitz 2004: 781-782)

Secondly, feathers were used for decorative and symbolic purposes. Even though they did not possess any inherent power, feathers could be used to represent spiritual powers and actual achievement of the wearers. The most valued and significant feathers used were those of the eagle. Eagle feathers were especially important in constructing a war bonnet. A white feather with a black tip was preferred. Among the Dakota Sioux, each feather had a particular meaning depending on how it was shaped or painted, for example, a red spot painted on top represented the killing of an enemy. A split feather served as a medal of honor, indicating the warrior had been wounded in battle. (Barrett and Markowitz 2004: 287)

Thirdly, dances have always played a highly significant role in Native American life. The American Indians believed that the earth and all living creatures were possessed by spirits which were understood and controlled by a great number of elaborate dances and songs. Therefore, Native Americans never separated religious occasions from social ones. There were dances for hunting, fishing, rites of passage, rain, and success in warfare. (Barrett and Markowitz 2004: 202-204)

C. Richard King (2006:56) states that Euro-Americans started using Indian imagery in athletics at the close of the nineteenth century. It happened due to "a number of societal shifts such as the close of the frontier, the end of armed conflict with indigenous peoples, the quickening of urbanization and industrialization, the prominence of social Darwinism and an associated push to assimilate Native Americans, the

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expansion of the American empire, and a crisis in what it meant to be and become a man. At the same time, Indian imagery emerged from a long tradition of playing Indian in the United States." Playing Indian allowed them to shape a uniquely American identity, marking their young nation, emphasizing its democratic values, independent spirit, and historic birthright. King (2006: 56) explains that "as schools and teams were wearing Indian imagery, scouting, woodcraft, and similar movement took shape in an effort to cultivate, redirect, and even save young men from feminizing perils of modern civilization." The appearance of Native American mascots mirrored the trajectory of the American empire. On the one hand, such mascots are trophies, the prize of conquest, reiterating the tendency of the settlers to take and remake Native places and practices without consent; on the other hand, encourage citizens and communities to validate who they are and where they came from – "the rightful heirs of once-proud people who valiantly fought against a superior civilization." (King 2006: 56)

The mascot issue first surfaced in the 1960s when the National Congress of American Indians in 1968 launched a campaign to bring an end to the use of Indian sports mascots and other media stereotypes. At the same instant, the American Indian Movement's founding chapter expressed resentment that calling a team Redskins was as offensive as Niggers, Spics, or Honkies. Many Native Americans consider the word *Redskin* as an absolute insult to the point of refusing to say the word publicly. (Johanson 2007: 144) In 1998, a coalition of American Indian artists, activists, and attorneys appealed to the Trademark Trials and Appeal Board of the U.S. Patent Office to invalidate the registration of the "Redskin" trademark because the racist term and associated images violate the Lanham (Trademark) Act, which prohibits the registration of marks that "may disparage or falsely suggest a connection with persons, living or dead, institutions, beliefs, or national symbols, or bring them into contempt, or disrepute." (qtd. in Breman 2004: 388) In 1999, the Trademark Trials and Appeal Board ruled in favor of the petitioners, however, in September 2003, a federal district court reversed the earlier decision. (Breman 2004: 388)

Bruce Johansen explains that the term *Indians* is not openly insulting. Surprising as it may seem, it is the context that may be the problem, not the name itself. In the case of Cleveland Indians, the decisive factor is "the face of stupidly grinning, single feathered Chief Wahoo." In 1972, in the context of a lawsuit against the Cleveland Indians, Native activist Russell Means openly criticized the image of Chief Wahoo: "That Indian looks like a damn fool, like a clown and we resent being portrayed as either savages or clowns." (qtd. in Johanson (2007: 147) Means not only stressed the fact that such images

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perpetuate stereotypes, but also turned to racial analogy to further his argument against mascots. "Take the Washington Redskins ... Redskin is a derogatory name ... what if we called them the Washington Niggers, or Washington Rednecks, or Washington Polacks?" (qtd. in Johanson 2007: 147)

Similarly to *Indians*, the term *Braves* is not offensive for many Native Americans. However, as Johanson tells us, "culture-demeaning antics invoked to ramp up team spirit in the name of the Braves, most notably the Tomahawk Chop." The Tomahawk Chop involves the synchronized lifting of arms to background music that could "be described as the soundtrack to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Hiawatha" on a bad-hair day," as Johanson puts it. (2007: 148)

Even if it is possible to accept that the use of Indian imagery in sports originates from a genuine desire and well-meant effort to honor the ideals and commemorate the memory of indigenous peoples, such motives, however, neither wipe out nor justify the detrimental consequences often connected with Native American mascots. Sadly, as King (2006: 67) observes, "educational institutions with Native American mascots provide clear and powerful testimony to the harmful effects associated with the continued use of Indian imagery in sports." Firstly, such mascots present a distorted image of American Indians. Secondly, they resort to stereotypes and caricatures therefore they misinterpret the cultures and histories of Native nations. Consequently, institutions that should promote "complex, humane, critical, and grounded understandings instead offer superficial, racist, normative, and fictional renderings." What is more, mascots encourage students and the broader community not to recognize and understand Native Americans for who they are, thus they contribute to the ongoing marginalization and exclusion of indigenous peoples. (King 2006: 67)

Another possible explanation for the continued use of Native American imagery refers to the marketing of Native America – especially the images, symbols, and spirituality of the culture. This is an example of cultural imperialism. "When the spiritual knowledge, rituals, and objects of historically subordinated cultures are transformed into commodities, economic and political powers merge to produce cultural imperialism. As a form of oppression exerted by a dominant society upon other cultures, and typically a source of economic profit, cultural imperialism secures and deepens the subordinated status of those cultures." (King, 2010: 7) Some common stereotypes of the Native American experience have a special charm in lifestyle adverts. For example, a usual message that underlies automobile advertisements appeals to the psychological need for independence, power, individualism, and the lost belief that there are frontiers to be

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conquered. That is why, in order to form associations with an "Indian" lifestyle, many cars and trucks have Indian names, such as the "Pontiac" or the Jeep "Cherokee." The general theory is that people use cars to obtain a sense of freedom, to get away, and to explore the wilderness. "What better way than in an Indian vehicle?" asks Jane Frazier. (1998: 340)

It is hard to escape the obvious conclusion that despite the opposition of American Indian leaders, negative effects, and current controversy, educational institutions and sports team are likely to keep Native American mascots for the immediate future. C. Richard King (2006: 69-70) provides six reasons such nicknames and symbols will remain popular for the time being. Firstly, there is not a shared understanding about what it means to use Indian imagery. As a matter of fact, most Americans have limited understanding of the history of stereotyping and racism. Secondly, the ongoing debate is not a dialogue, but a cultural battle between entrenched position. Thirdly, individuals and institutions have fashioned elaborate traditions that make mascots powerful as way to know oneself, recall the past, have fun, and bond with others. Fourthly, the demands placed on colleges and universities to please alumni, to attract donors, to recruit students, to value diversity, to teach critical thinking, and to market themselves as a distinct brand – make it difficult for them to do the morally right thing. Fifthly, Native American mascots are lucrative. Sixthly, as long as movies and journalism continue to shape public opinion about American Indians through partial, superficial, inaccurate, and even stereotypical accounts of indigenous peoples, Native American mascots will thrive.

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Here is my short bio:

I am a teacher of English and a Ph.D. candidate. My dissertation focuses on constructing Native American identity through myths. I have given a paper entitled "Native American Identity and Cultural Appropriation in Postethnic Reality" in the international seminar (November 2014) - *Neo-philology at the threshold of the 3rd Millennium. Multiculturalism, interpretation and relation in literature, culture, linguistics and methodology of teaching foreign languages* in Siedlce Wersal. My interests include American and Canadian ethnic literature, identity projects, storytelling, myth criticism and above all magical realism.

What Is the American Identity? Anonymous. How I define American identity is living in the land founded by both political and religious leaders, and being part of the American culture. As Americans we are viewed as the abolitionist who fights for what we believe is just. During the founding years of our nation we were led by thoughts of both the radicals and constrictive, religious and political leaders. Over the years we have come to reach a state of equilibrium between the opposing groups for a stable and functioning society. Most Americans value civil rights. Compared to countries around the world the most common form of cultural appropriation that many Americans make is literally claiming to be Native American or "part-Native American" based on bogus family lore. And when I ... Ironically, it's not common for White Americans to do this with Black blood or Black identity, barring odd outliers like Rachel Dolezal or Jessica Krug who just lie outright about being Black (not just based on family lore of having "Black blood"). But, if this was more commonly claimed, I suspect it would cause more vigorous push-back. There is no major pushback on the false Native claims, with the exception of a few small-circulation pieces in Native media and a few answers on random Q&A forums. Even the coverage of the Elizabeth Warren story tended to break down along partisan lines. Cultural appropriation refers to the use of objects or elements of a non-dominant culture in a way that doesn't respect their original meaning, give credit to their source, or reinforces stereotypes or contributes to oppression. In this way, cultural appropriation is a layered and nuanced phenomenon that many people may have trouble understanding or may not realize when they are doing it themselves. It may be natural to merge and blend cultures as people from different backgrounds come together and interact. Most often, culture is thought of as belonging to particular ethnic groups. Appropriation. This is an extreme example of the cultural appropriation of Native American traditions. Voguing. Do you remember the "voguing" craze made popular by Madonna back in the 1990s? CULTURAL APPROPRIATION IN CONTEMPORARY WITCHCRAFT AND NEOPAGANISM by Kathryn A. Gottlieb. A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors. (Anthropology and Sociology). Advisory Committee: Lisa K. Neuman, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Native American Studies, Advisor Sarah Harlan-Haughey, Assistant Professor of English and CLAS Honors Preceptor Nancy Lewis, Instructor, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Darren Ranco, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Chair of Native American Programs Katrina Wynn, Archivist and Humanities Professional. Abstract. Native American identity in the United States is an evolving topic based on the struggle to define "Native American" or "(American) Indian" both for people who consider themselves Native American and for people who do not. Some people seek an identity that will provide for a stable definition for legal, social, and personal purposes. There are a number of different factors which have been used to define "Indianness," and the source and potential use of the definition play a role in what definition is