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# Redskins Revisited: Competing Constructions of the Washington Redskins Mascot

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REDSKINS REVISITED:  
COMPETING CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE WASHINGTON REDSKINS MASCOT

By

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, 2012

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Competing Constructions of the Washington Redskins Mascot

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This project looks at how synecdoche and ideographs function in the construction of competing position in the controversy surrounding the Washington Redskins mascot. I examined the rhetoric produced by both the Washington Redskins organization and its fans, as well as the rhetoric of Change the Mascot, the Oneida Indian Nation of New York and other opponents between the years of 2013 and 2015. Based in part on Moore's (1993, 1994, 1997) argument that synecdoche and ideographs often prevent resolution and produce irreconcilable conflict, I extend this notion insofar as the controversy surrounding the Redskins mascot appears to be shifted towards opponents position of <equality> over supporters' claims of <tradition>. This project examines how synecdoche can be used as a tool by rhetors to examine the challenges made by groups in such controversies against certain synecdochal relationships. Ultimately, this project suggests potential implications for the use of synecdoche and ideographs not only as tools for the skilled rhetor, but also how such theoretical perspectives may aid individuals and groups in denying the possibility of irreconcilable conflict. Furthermore, I explore what implications this project has for the larger discourse surrounding Native American mascot use including but not limited to the educational opportunities provided by the coverage of such controversies in the media.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

The commodified world of American capitalism is filled with allusions to American Indians (Staurowsky, 1999). Indeed, one need not look very hard to find Native American imagery on products in the grocery store like “Land o’ Lakes” butter, or on a number of vehicles that use Native American tribes as part of their marketing efforts (i.e. Cherokee, Winnebago, Pontiac), and even clothing lines such as the Liz Claiborne “Crazy Horse” collection. Arguably the most prominent and controversial appropriation of the images of Native Americans can be found with athletic team mascots. According to Black (2002), American Indians call the appropriation of images, names, and traditions “mascots” because of the commodity culture inherent in the commemoration of Native peoples as commercial objects. The issues surrounding mascots that represent Native Americans often go unnoticed by the public at large due in part to the widespread, accepted commodification of Native American imagery throughout U.S. popular culture. Indeed, the alarming level of unquestioning acceptance of these images is, according to Kenneth S. Stern (1998), “a reflection of the limits of dehumanization our culture will allow... It deeply concerns me that many people of goodwill find these dehumanizing portraits unremarkable” (as reported in “American Jewish Committee,”p.11).

Currently, over 1,000 Native American mascots remain in use by high school, university and professional teams. According to Davis (2002), if we consider all the mascots representing Native Americans (e.g. Indians, Braves, Redskins, and Chiefs), Native American mascots are the most common mascot in U.S. sports. The number of Native American mascots that remain in use has dropped dramatically from the estimated 2,500 schools that used them in 1999 (Pressley, 1999). Prior to the 1990s however, Rosenstein (2001) maintains that the movement got very little attention from national media outlets. According to a chronology compiled by Rosenstein

(2001), Dartmouth College was the first institution to drop its mascot back in 1969, when they changed from the Indians to Big Green. Dartmouth was originally founded to educate American Indians, which makes the college changing its mascot all the more significant. Such representations can create “unwelcome and often times hostile learning environments for American Indian students that affirms negative images/ stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society” (Center for American Progress, 2014). During the 20-year period in which the press viewed the mascot controversy as all “fun and games” (Rosenstein, 2001), Stanford chose to adopt Cardinal over their previous Indians name and Prince Lightfoot mascot in 1972. Ultimately, while only a dozen or so colleges and universities dropped or changed their mascots between 1969 and 1989, in 1988 the Michigan State Civil Rights Commission called for an end to Native American names, logos, and mascots at all public schools in Michigan.

According to Rosenstein (2001), mascot controversies began to get more news coverage after 1989, even gaining national attention when Franz Lids, writing in *Sports Illustrated*, called for the elimination of American Indian mascots and symbols in 1990. Protests at the 1991 and 1995 World Series and the 1992 Super Bowl, where Native Americans and their supporters protested the use of Native American mascots by the Cleveland Indians, Atlanta Braves, and the Washington Redskins respectively, helped to bring the mascot issue onto the mainstream media’s map. While communication scholar Jackson Miller (1999) details the manner in which the messages of protesters were largely ignored, the message was finally getting out there. Indeed, more and more schools began to adopt new mascots, and some schools like the University of Wisconsin and the University of Iowa announced they would no longer schedule games with teams using Indian mascots. According to Southern Nazarene University’s president their decision to change their own mascot from Redskins to Crimson Storm, in 1998, came at a

time when “with the increased attention in the country to do it, we just did not want to be the last to make a change, and I feel eventually most schools with that kind of mascot or nickname will do” (Rosenstein, 2001). Indeed, it would appear that the growing attention in national news outlets was responsible in part for the increased public opinion that “the use of American Indians as mascots and nicknames in sports is a controversial issue” (Rosenstein, 2001).

While the number of colleges and universities that continue to use Native mascots has declined to approximately forty-four, the use of Native American mascots at the professional level has remained unchanged. Professional franchises that use Native American mascots seem to be nigh untouchable and none more so than the Washington Redskins. Since 1992, the organization has faced public criticism and controversy over the Redskins mascots, and has seen efforts intensify since 2013, including a campaign by the Oneida Indian Nation of New York, petitions brought to the US Trademark Trial and Appeal board, and Congressional legislation against the NFL. My thesis will examine the rhetoric of the Redskins controversy since 2013 and focus on the competing constructions of the meaning of the Redskin mascot among its supporters and opponents. In the rest of this chapter, I will first explain how rhetorical scholarship on synecdoche and ideographs can offer a lens for critically analyzing competing positions in the Redskins controversy, then discuss the scholarly literature surrounding Native American mascots, and finally provide a historical background of the controversy in order to provide context for the most recent developments.

### **Synecdoche and Ideograph**

In order to analyze how competing viewpoints in the Redskins controversy articulate and defend their respective positions I turn first to the rhetorical concept of synecdoche. According to Kenneth Burke (1969), synecdoche is one of four master tropes. Synecdoche is a figure similar

to metaphor, but it deals in particular with matters of representation. More specifically, synecdoche expresses a representation in which a part stands for the whole, or a whole for the part. According to Burke (1969), in occasions in which the individual is “treated as a replica of the universe and vice versa, we have the ideal synecdoche” (p.508). Furthermore, in instances of political representation, synecdochic form is present where some part of the social body is held to be “representative of the society as a whole” (Burke, 1969, p.508). While there may be disagreements within a society regarding what part should represent the whole, for Burke (1969), any act of representation automatically implies a synecdochic relationship insofar as the act is held to be “truly representative” (p.508). In particular, synecdochal constructions within the realm of public argument maintain controversy through the competing social realities that they conceptualize. Moore (1993, 1994, 1997, 2003) has explored in a variety of case studies how conflicting synecdochal constructions create competing social realities. Specifically, Moore has explored how the competing synecdochal representations of the spotted owl (1993), handgun (1994), cigarette (1997), and salmon (2007) help to organize public controversies, showing how each synecdoche “functions to establish a context for debate, provide an organizing principle for debate... but it does not provide a ground for resolution” (1993, p.259).

While rhetorical tropes like synecdoche reflect and distinguish opposing points of view they simultaneously also contribute to the creation of competing social truths based on the “God” terms that the tropes come to represent for the group as a whole. According to Moore’s (1993, 1994, 1997) analysis of the controversies regarding the spotted owl, environmental tobacco smoke, and the Brady Bill, the competing synecdochal representations of the spotted owl, cigarette, and handgun respectively come to represent the ideographs of <life> and <liberty> and thus are used as organizing principles to defend the respective positions of competing ideologies.



Indeed, these “God” or “Ultimate” terms that synecdochal constructions may come to represent, like <life> or <liberty>, become issues in and of themselves so far as the competing constructions come to represent ideological commitments in synecdochic form (Moore, 1996).

According to McGee (1980) ideographs, such as <life> and <liberty>, are one-term sums of an ideological orientation that may be used to support a particular line of argument. An ideograph can be defined as a high-order abstraction of an ordinary language term which “warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable” (McGee, 1980, 15). McGee (1980) argues that the concept of ideograph is meant to be purely descriptive of an essentially social reality. Indeed, it is because of the manner in which ideographs are definitive of a given society “into which each of us is born... and which we must accept to belong” (p.9) that their invocations contain so much power. Due in part to their understanding as “God” or “Ultimate” terms, ideographs such as <life> and <liberty> have the ability to “control” power and “shape” reality in and through the use of such terms (Burke, 1970, p.183). For example, in the Brady Bill handgun debate the National Rifle Association (NRA) constitutes a discourse of power through their invocation of <liberty> in defense of handgun ownership. However, at the same time, Handgun Control Inc. (HCI) invokes <life> in their attempt to express the need for stricter legislation at the federal level to control firearms. The competing representations of the handgun in the Brady Bill debate by the NRA and the HCI shape the debate and maintain controversy over gun control by becoming issues in and of themselves.

According to McGee (1980) the significance of ideographs comes in the form of their concrete history as usages. For example, liberty as an ideograph only exists insofar as its

meaning and description are acceptable and believable within a culture (McGee, 1980). Indeed, it is to this extent that ideographs exist in real discourse, “functioning clearly and evidently as agents of political consciousness” (McGee, 1980, p.7). When a claim is warranted by a specific ideograph it is presumed that human beings will react predictably given an ideograph’s function as an integral component of our societal ideology. In Moore’s (1993) analysis of the spotted owl controversy, the timber industry argues for the spotted owl as a representation of the challenges against their *liberty* and conversely environmentalists argue that the owl represents the *life* of the forest. Such differing representational forms may reflect “divergent, and even incommensurable realities” (Moore, 1993, p.260). As a result, controversy is generated as well as limited by the synecdochal form given to the spotted owl through the competing discourses of <life> or <liberty>. According to McGee (1980) an analysis of ideographic usages can reveal systems in which “the capacity both to control ‘power’ and to influence the shape and texture of each individual’s ‘reality’” (p.5) is made more apparent. In such a manner, ideographs “constitute excuses for specific beliefs and behaviors” (McGee, 1980, p.16), the preservation of the *life* of the forest for environmentalists and conversely the continued *liberty* to exploit the material resources of the forest by the timber industry.

When conflicting synecdochic constructions from opposing groups come to represent specific ideographs (such as *life* or *liberty* in the previous examples), then, such symbols function as *representational* ideographs, in which the spotted owl, handgun, and cigarette come to function as representations of these summations of a political orientation (Burke, 1969; McGee, 1980). Moore (1993, 1994, 1997) argues that the representational ideographs of the spotted owl in the Northwest forest controversy, as well as the handgun in the Brady Bill debate, and the cigarette in the debate over environmental tobacco smoke all maintain conflict by becoming

issues in and of themselves. Indeed, as the synecdochal development of the owl, handgun, and cigarette create conflicting representations, ambiguity is maintained over their previously distinct roles, which in part serves to maintain and prolong the controversy (Moore, 1994). In other words, if the debate evolves to focus on a dispute about the actual or “true” representations of the icon, polarization of viewpoints is furthered and the two groups in turn focus their attention on a disputed part of the problem, instead of the whole. According to Moore, one of the primary implications of representational ideographs used in synecdochal form, is that the simplification of points made through synecdoche renders the competing representational ideographs more concrete, but may also reduce and distort the controversy.

It is through the reduction and representation of synecdochal constructions that cause, for example, the cigarette in the environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) debate to transform the controversy into one over a matter of <life> or <liberty> (Moore, 1997) as opposed to one over the scientific knowledge regarding the effects of cigarette smoke. In such instances, the material object as representational ideograph limits or reduces the controversy into an either/or dilemma. In such a way, the competing representational ideographs of <life> and <liberty> are a result of the competing value systems of the opposing sides as opposed to the dispute over the scientific fact concerning ETS as a carcinogen. Moore argues that as long as such representations prevail, the social controversy regarding environmental tobacco smoke will be sustained insofar as that the debate continues to be over conflicting value systems rather than a dispute over environmental tobacco smoke. Representational ideographs are therefore an important mechanism in the rhetorical dynamics of social controversy.

In a similar manner, I believe that a perspective that considers the use of synecdoche and representational ideographs would provide a greater understanding of the controversy

surrounding the Washington mascot. In particular, such an approach may reveal the manner in which the controversy is maintained through and by the synecdochic constructions employed by supporters and opponents in defense of their respective positions. Indeed, Black (2002) has already acknowledged the manner in which universities have attempted to provide a positive synecdoche for the Florida State “Seminoles” and the University of Illinois “Fighting Illini.” The manner in which mascots replace Native American cultures with nonspecific images that “come to represent the only image dominant society sees of Native America” (Black, 2002, p.609) is the crucial reduction that results from this part for whole synecdochal relationship. This project seeks to expand upon our current understanding of the mascot controversy by taking up a consideration of the synecdochal representations surrounding the Redskin. In such a way, the Redskin can be seen both as a synecdoche for the longstanding marginalization of Native Americans from the perspective of those opposing the Redskin mascot, as well as a representation of the tradition, honor, and tribute status that Native Americans have been given in sporting cultures by supporters of the Redskins.

### **Literature Review**

Scholars from a variety of disciplines, including Communication Studies, have examined Native American mascot issues. A primary outlet for this work has been the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*; specifically, Charles Springwood’s (2004) “I’m Indian too!: Claiming Native American Identity, Crafting Authority in Mascot Debates,” Pauline Strong’s (2004) “The Mascot Slot: Cultural Citizenship, Political Correctness, and Pseudo-Indian Sports Symbols,” and Laurel Davis-Delano’s (2007) “Eliminating Native American Mascots: Ingredients for Success” have all discussed Native American mascot related issues to varying degrees. Additional contributions in this area of scholarship have been made in part through the edited compilations of essays and

articles from activists and academics alike. Two in particular; *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascot Controversy* as edited by C. Richard King and Charles Springwood (2001) as well as *The Native American Mascot Controversy: A Handbook* also edited by C. Richard King (2010b) provide comprehensive looks at the Native American mascot controversy with particular focus given to providing an in-depth account of attempts to explore the origins of Native American mascots, the messages they convey, and the reasons for their continued use.

These compilations provide a means through which to become immersed in mascot controversies at large and understand the lengthy history regarding Native American mascots in the first place, including how and why some mascots have been changed while others continue to be used despite growing challenges against them. Of particular interest to this project is the respective acknowledgment that these pieces make with regards to certain prevalent themes surrounding mascot controversies. The shift in perspectives surrounding mascot issues from being primarily one against the tradition of cultural appropriation towards one supporting mutual respect and equality is of specific importance for this project (Strong, 2004; Davis, 2002; Baca, 2004; King, 2010a). However, it is equally important to understand the history of tradition and honor used in defense by supporters of keeping mascots as well as the implications of the long standing tradition of cultural appropriation regarding Native American images, names, and traditions. In addition, opposition to specific mascots is viewed by some supporters as a scapegoating tactic given the widespread proliferation and acceptance of Native American imagery throughout America. Moreover, these same themes are reproduced within the Communication Studies literature on the subject. Within the literature in Communication Studies, Jackson Miller (1999), Raul Tovares (2002), and Jason Edward Black (2002) are among

the few who have examined controversies over Native American mascots and how these issues have evolved over time.

Furthermore, all of these authors share in voicing a reoccurring theme that is best expressed by Ono and Buescher (2001) when they recognize that “Euro-American culture has made a habit of appropriating, and redefining what is ‘distinctive’ and constitutive of Native Americans” (p.35-36). Furthermore, Miller (1999), Tovares (2002), and Black (2002), to varying degrees, acknowledge the attempts to control and commodify Native American culture and identity through their appropriation of Native Americans as mascots. Indeed, since many Euro-Americans encounter Native Americans only as mascots, these unreal Indians materialize the most basic assumptions of Native Americans as bloodthirsty warriors or noble savages in an attempt to “define, and on an ontological level, *inhabit* what it means to be Native” (Black, 2002, p.610, emphasis original).

**Calls for mutual respect and equality.** According to Baca (2004), “In the great spectrum of race relations in America, we can say without equivocation that American Indians are treated differently than other minority races” (p.79). Moreover, the extent to which negative images of Native Americans are accepted while those same images of other racial and ethnic groups are not speaks volumes about the degree of inequality experienced by those same peoples. The manner in which the law with respect to negative Native Americans images “has not advanced to the same level as it has with respect to other racial or ethnic minorities” (Baca, 2004, p.80) is yet another indication of such inequality. As Strong (2004) puts it in his assessment of “the mascot slot,” an integral component in parodying mascots is an attempt to point out that “‘Redface’ caricatures that would not now be tolerated if they portrayed other racial or ethnic groups are institutionalized” (p.81) and accepted by a majority of the public.

The conclusion that the continued support for the use of Native American mascots “constitutes institutional racism” (Munson, 2010, p.13) is supported throughout the mascot literature. For example, Black’s (2002) analysis of the mascot issues at Florida State University and the University of Illinois similarly argues that the mascot is a signifying practice that “bolsters white power and weakens Indigenous power” (p.608) through the commodification of Native American cultures. Davis (2002) deconstructs the arguments of mascot supporters by showing how mascots reinforce the stereotypical representations of Native Americans that were once used to justify the invasion of Native American lands and the conquering of Native American peoples. Additionally, Davis (2002) reinforces the extent to which Native American mascots constitute a very real threat to Native American’s sense of self-identity when recalling the difficulties inherent in teaching Native American children to be proud of their heritage when they simultaneously do not want to be identified as Native American when in the presence of such mascots. Baca (2004) mirrors many of the comments made by Davis; in particular, the degree to which Native American mascots create a hostile learning environment for Native American youths as well as the manner in which young Native Americans understand that the continued use of such mascots function as a badge of inferiority for their cultures. Such an environment, according to Baca (2004), functions in part as an “insidious invasion of his or her educational experience” (p.85).

Furthermore, Strong (2004) insists that the mascot issue needs to be viewed as a matter of cultural citizenship in order to establish an “equal space of belonging for Native Americans” (p.84). Indeed, it is the extent to which the uses of Native American mascots are normalized in everyday activities that exclude “contemporary Native Americans from full citizenship by treating them as signs rather than as speakers” (Strong, 2004, p.83). According to one of the

petitioners in the 1999 Harjo case, Raymond D. Apodaca, there would be a national outcry if any other ethnic or religious group were being treated as the Redskins are treating Native Americans. For Apodaca, the suit represents Native Americans as a whole “asking [for] nothing more than what every other group of people in America has demanded and gotten --- to be treated with dignity and respect” (Harjo, 2001, p.202).

While many other mascot controversies seemingly boil down to the issue of cultural appropriation and the ritual/play dialectic, and acknowledging that that certainly is an issue, it appears that the Redskins debate in particular has remained dually focused on the inequality that name represents in the treatment of Native American peoples. Indeed, according to Tovares’ (2002) analysis of official statements made by the University of North Dakota about its own “Fighting Sioux” mascot, mascot controversies on a larger scale represent “ongoing struggles among different groups in society to define the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable expressions, terms and definitions” (p.77). Furthermore, Tovares (2002) finds that the growing number of Native Americans and those whites who support them on this issue represents a “shift in attitudes... in the state of North Dakota, and in the rest of the nation” (p.77). For Tovares (2002), challenging the legitimacy of the “Fighting Sioux” mascot indicates in part, a shift in consciousness that “demands for respect of Native American culture and for the full participation of the school’s Native American students in decision making processes” (p.77).

Moreover, it appears that equality and justice for Native Americans regarding mascots in society depends “on our abilities to empathize with those who are different from us” (Davis, 2010, p. 30) and moreover that for Native Americans, mascot issues boil down to just that. Jensen (2010) shares such sentiment in his claims that if we allow Native Americans themselves to speak on this issue, “individually and collectively we will take a step toward claiming our own



dignity and humanity” (p.39) by treating them with the mutual respect and equality they deserve. Indeed, Jensen (2010) believes it is far past time for white America to shut up and listen to Native Americans when it comes to how “Indians are named and represented” (p.39). As long as such Native American mascots persist, Native Americans themselves will continue to occupy a marginal position in American society with very real repercussion in their immediate lives.

**A history of tradition and honor.** According to a summary of common arguments for the retention of Native American mascots by C. Richard King (2010), “mascots honor Indians; they are not meant to defame, injure, insult, or give offense; they are not racist; mascots are all about fun; there are more important problems to worry about” (p.149-150). While such arguments refuse to engage the living Native Americans who have expressed exactly the opposite, supporters continue to defend mascots with such claims. Munson (2010) explains, for example, how supporters of Native American mascots often defend the extent to which mascots maintain and promote continued stereotypes of Native Americans through the core themes of tradition, honor, respect, and tribute. Such defenses, she argues, were created without an understanding of the deep meaning and appropriate use of sacred objects, ceremonial traditions, and traditional dress of Native Americans.

According to Staurowsky (1999) the defense of American Indian mascots is rooted in the notion that these images celebrate the virtues of Indian character, honor an admirable people, and memorialize a forgotten people. One particular telling anecdote comes from a student at Menomonie (WI) high school who articulates that “We incorporate words like dignity, strength, honor, pride, and we really give a lot of respect to the tradition” (as reported in “Hearing held,” 1998, p.2) in continuing to use Native American imagery as mascots. Moreover, another student at Birmingham (CA) high school shared a similar sentiment in defending their Braves because it

is a positive symbol that represents “the land of the free and the home of the brave” (as reported in Willman, 1997). Tovares’ (2002) analysis also points out the central role that myths of “honor” play in contemporary arguments of mascot supporters. According to UND’s official statement published in 1999 on UND’s Web page, *Code of Student Life*, and the *UND Directory*, their reasoning behind why they chose to adopt the Fighting Sioux moniker was “to honor those who had lived in the upper Midwest before Europeans came to settle the region” (Tovares, 2002, p.80). According to Tovares’ (2002) analysis, any attempt to address how a people who only fifty years prior had been hunted down and killed came to be seen as “honorable” is not present.

Indeed, it is the manner in which the historical documents describe the Sioux at the time of the change that problematizes the myth of “honor”. UND’s decision to identify itself as the Fighting Sioux and its defense of such a change occurs in the absence of historical material to support the claim that they adopted the mascot “to honor the Native Americans in the region” (p.85). Tovares (2002) argues that his critical analysis of UND’s official statement on the Fighting Sioux mascot shows the manner in which official proclamations can be found in many of the myths a community creates and tells itself in what he argues “help justify the status quo” (p.91).

Tovares’ analysis of historical and contemporary documents about the Fighting Sioux provides insight into how contemporary defenses of Native American mascots appeal to “honor” while deflecting attention from the stereotypes and assumptions behind those mascots. Indeed, Tovares finds that the specific use of language of the Fighting Sioux myth, especially the use of words like honor, pride, tradition, and respect shows that the relationship is changing. In particular, how UND communicates its identity to the rest of the world can no longer include Native Americans as members of the community and yet marginalize and exclude those very

people from contributing to the university identity that was developed in the absence of Native Americans, at a time in which the relationship between European Americans and Native Americans was “more openly antagonistic” (Tovares, 2002, p.91) than it is today. Ultimately, what Tovares (2002) contributes to the literature regarding Native American mascot use is the manner in which the dominant discourse attempts to control the identity of Native Americans through a historically inaccurate depiction.

Furthermore, as athletic and school traditions grow up around Native American logos and images those very athletic traditions can be hard to change when much of a “community’s ceremonial and ritual life, as well as its pride” (Munson, 2010, p.17) become tied to those traditions and images. Indeed, it is because of the deep tradition and honor that some believe these images uphold that changing them is often met with such extreme resistance. For Jensen (2010), the common argument that Native American mascots should remain unchanged in part because of their attribution to calls of tradition and honor is powerful in that “tradition makes some people (mostly white) feel good” (p.38) and moreover that those same people believe “tradition trump[s] other considerations” (p.38) when regarding the continued use of those mascots. Furthermore, to assert that the symbol of the American Indian is consistent with “the land of the free and home of the brave” ignores the history of genocide, forced assimilation, and the continued mistreatment of American Indians (Staurowsky, 1999).

Springwood’s (2004) analysis of supporters’ attempts at crafting authority in mascot debates explains how the appeal to “tradition” also reinforces a reductionist, oversimplified narrative about Native Americans. Supporters seemingly presume Native Americans to be united in their opinions on mascots because they view them as one communal Pan-American people. Furthermore, Springwood (2004) suggests that because of the prevalence of Native American

mascots and images and their caricature like nature, the public expects unanimity in understanding the Native American perspective. The discursive impact of “playing Indian” as exemplified by mascot use contribute to an understanding of Native American peoples that freezes them historically “flattening their cultures and simplifying their histories” (Springwood, 2004, p.67).

**A tradition of appropriation.** The tradition of playing Indian points to another key issue in mascot controversies, the issue of appropriation. For example, in Miller’s (1999) analysis of protests surrounding the 1991 and 1995 World Series as well as the 1992 Super Bowl (all of which featured professional teams with Native American mascots) he observed that protestors focused their efforts on showing the contrast between fans entering the stadium dressed in chicken feathers, red face paint, and beating drums and images of true Native Americans who do not look or act as fans might imagine. Sports fans often find themselves embodying the identity of their team which becomes problematic when they are “playing Indian” (Deloria, 1998) through stereotypical actions and when their performance stands in contrast to the reality of Native American peoples.

Miller argues that appropriation then becomes an important issue in the controversy, and we can observe how these arguments take place through synecdochic forms to characterize what that appropriation represents. Protestors claimed that logos and mascots lead to ignorance and racism on the part of owners and fans, in part by evoking a false sense of history regarding Native American peoples that reinforces the derogatory “bloodthirsty savage” stereotype. However, fans, owners, coaches, and managers suggest that the “playful” performances are “meant to honor or pay tribute to Native Americans” (Miller, 1999, p.196). Furthermore, those fans who view dressing up like Indians as harmless play believe that if there is any “racism

involved, it does not travel beyond the confines of the stadium and therefore is not 'real' racism (Miller, 1999, p.196). Ultimately, the protests have been successful, more or less, in raising awareness about the "bastardization of Native American symbols and rituals by the dominant culture" (Miller, 1999, p.199).

Similarly, Black's (2002) analysis focuses on how universities justify their appropriation of Native American imagery in mascot choices. Institutions would like us to believe that their appropriation of Native American identity is intended to highlight the honor, bravery, and courage of Native peoples: "their mascots are positive synecdoches... which embody all that is good about one's identity" (p.610). This argument mirrors Tovares (2002) in recognizing that universities connect their mascots with a past they have constructed in which "the collegiate 'Indian' is the white man's 'good' Indian" (p.613). Yet these positions reflect the power involved in appropriating a marginalized identity. Black agrees with Bosmajian (1973), who claims that "once one has been categorized through the language of suppression, one loses most of the power to determine one's future and most of the control over one's identity and destiny" (Bosmajian, 1973, p.93).

Indeed, Black argues that one of the primary implications of his study is to reassess the manner in which the mascotting of Indigenous cultures violates American Indian's rights to self-identity, and furthermore that his analysis "queries whether mascotting is the twenty-first century's version of a conquering of Native America" (p.616). In his view, the only way in which universities can truly "honor" Native American would be to retire the collegiate Indian.

**A scapegoat issue.** Yet another issue that the scholarly literature identifies in mascot controversies is supporters' claim that criticism of a particular mascot is used as a scapegoat that deflects attention from more significant problems. According to Staurowsky (1999), one of the

reasons why supporters often dismiss the mascot issue is due to the widespread prevalence of Native American imagery throughout American culture, reaching “a degree of ‘cultural saturation’ that does not encourage racial sensitivity” (p.72). As a result, mascot supporters do not see a problem and dismiss efforts to change mascots as absurd.

Springwood (2004) finds similar testimony in remarks made during a University of Illinois sponsored dialogue surrounding their Chief Illiniwek mascot:

Ask anybody and they will tell you they are “part” Indian. Why would we say this if we are racist? There are many things in this nation named after Indians; should we change everything from street names to parks to school names? Seems ridiculous to me. (Jessa Ovitt in Garippo, 2000)

Here it is clear that the widespread recognition of Native American imagery has made mascot debates appear trivial. Munson (2010) also acknowledges the degree to which supporters of keeping Native American mascots often argue that mascot issues are simply not “important issues”.

Miller (1999) found similar testimony expressed by sports fans in response to the Native American mascot protests of 1991, 1992, and 1995. Indeed, one fan argued that it was narrow minded of Native Americans to tell others they do not have a right to wear headdresses by equating such an act to that of learning to use chopsticks or singing the blues when those practices do not come from White America. For those fans, these changes represent a very real worry about “all sorts of other changes [that] must be made in the spirit of equality” (Miller, 1999, p.197) such as the need to rename Indiana, Indianapolis, and Sioux City because they share Indian names. While some fans argue over the extent to which equality is being used unfairly to advocate for Native Americans, others express that “there have to be more important

issues confronting Native Americans than a baseball team and its fans” (Miller, 1999, p.198).

This position suggest that fans are attempting to defend their continued support of Native American mascots by articulating more important issues that need to be addressed.

Some mascot supporters even use this suggestion that there are “more important issues” to deflect claims about equality and transform the issues into one of free speech. According to W. Keith Beason, “no culture should have the right to exclusively dictate the metaphorical use of signs associated with itself. The borrowing of specific symbols, especially when there is no malice intended, is surely part of our freedom of speech” (in Miller, 1999, p.197). Such a defense fails to recognize the irony in such a position that argues Native Americans do not have the right to tell others how they should be represented but that non-Natives appear to be exempt in their defense of such symbols. Indeed, Miller (1999) believes that success ultimately revolves around the ritual/play dialectic in order to convince fans that the “pretend can do real harm” (p.200). Unfortunately, the task of reeducating fans must overcome the degree of cultural saturation that maintains an understanding of Native Americans as cemented firmly in the past and fails to accept an understanding of contemporary Native people as fellow Americans.

**Summary.** These articles contribute to my study by identifying some of the major issues that typically emerge in the rhetorical constitution of mascot controversies. While the opponents’ discourse centers around the need for mutual respect and equality for Native American peoples, the deflections made by supporters of Native mascots in terms of tradition and honor are based in part on limited and stereotypical understandings of Native Americans which these mascots represent. This limited stereotypical understanding ignores both the shared and lived experiences of Native American peoples in their quest for equal treatment for all Americans. Indeed, the extent to which this controversy has evolved, and continues to gain momentum, is a testament to

how the lack of understanding regarding mascot issues continues to be challenged by Natives and non-Natives alike. Furthermore, the implications of the previous literatures as well as the growing contributions from within Communication Studies serves in part as a very real acknowledgement of the degree to which the movement is gaining ground and its scholarly recognition as an area worthy of study.

### **The Redskins Controversy**

Before an in-depth analysis of the most recent phase of the Redskins controversy, it is necessary to become acquainted with how that particular debate has evolved over time. Beginning in 1992, Suzan Shown Harjo and seven other petitioners brought suit against the Washington organization over the disparaging nature of the associated names of the team, including but not limited to “Redskins” and “Redskinettes,” in an attempt to cancel their use of federal trademark protections. The lawsuit argued that the name “Redskin,” which most Native Americans say “is the worst epithet hurled at Native Peoples in the English language” (Harjo, 2001, p.189), was offensive since long before 1967, when the Washington organization obtained their first trademark license, and as such should not continue to be protected under the 1946 Lanham Act. The suit maintained that the term “Redskin” originated in the 1600s and was derogatorily used in bounty advertisements for Indian children, women, and men, wanted dead or alive. Once it was realized that it was too cumbersome to transport wagon loads of whole bodies, the practice began of paying bounties “for the bloody red skins and scalps as evidence of Indian kill(s)” (Harjo, 2001, p.190). Indeed, Native Americans continued to be exterminated through the late 1800s without remorse. Redskins is a word that “should remind every American there was a time in history when America paid bounties for human beings” (Pewewardy, 2001, p.272).



In 1999, seven years after the initial petition from Harjo and a group of other Native Americans, the Trademark Trial and Appeal board ruled in Harjo's favor. The ruling was later dismissed in 2005 during litigation when the Redskins organization appealed in federal court on the grounds that Harjo did not produce enough evidence to show that the name was insulting and a laches defense, which prohibits a party from waiting so long to file a claim that it becomes unfair to the other party. It is important to note that the Court of Appeals did not actually rule on the merits of the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board's decision but dismissed the initial ruling over this procedural issue.

Despite the ruling of *Harjo et al. v. Pro Football* in 2005 to send the previous case back to the appeals court for consideration of the laches issue, the controversy over the Washington Redskins mascot has accelerated since 2013 as the Oneida Indian Nation, members of Congress, and Native American activists like Harjo and Amanda Blackhorse have pressured the Washington Redskins organization to change their mascot. In March 2013, Congress introduced a bill, called the Non-Disparagement of Native American Persons or Peoples in Trademark Registration Act that would amend the 1946 Trademark Act and cancel any trademark that used the "R-word" (Toensing, 2013). Two months later, ten members of Congress sent a letter to Redskins owner Dan Snyder and the Commissioner of the National Football League, Roger Goodell, asking them to consider changing the name (ICTMNS, 2014b). Goodell, who responded in June saying that the "Redskins" nickname is a "unifying force that stands for strength, courage, pride, and respect," appeared to change his mind by early September, stating in an interview on a D.C. radio station "that the NFL league and team officials need to be listening to the mounting calls for change" (Change the Mascot, 2013). Goodell's statement came just days after the Oneida Indian Nation launched its first radio ads in their Change the

Mascot campaign, a campaign organized by Ray Halbritter, leader of the Oneida Indian Nation. The campaign uses radio ads, polls, opposition research, academic studies, YouTube videos, Twitter hashtags, and media interviews, to advocate for the changing of the Redskins mascot. Their series of radio ads coincided with the Washington team's scheduled games in every city the team played. Halbritter even went so far as to schedule a symposium on the issue in the same Washington hotel that NFL owners used for their annual fall meeting just one day prior. Halbritter invited NFL executives to attend the symposium, for the opportunity it would provide them to gain a greater understanding about the issue and the names offensive nature.

In the midst of this campaign, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office canceled the Washington Redskins' trademark registrations in June 2014 with their ruling on *Blackhorse v. Pro Football, Inc.* The 99-page ruling by the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board said that the team's name and logo are offensive and disparaging which makes them ineligible for federal trademark protection under the Lanham Act. This Lanham Act denies trademark protection for names that "may disparage" or bring people into contempt. While the ruling remains mostly symbolic and will not force the Washington team to change its name, the ruling serves as a different kind of victory in that it demonstrates increasing recognition of what Native American activists have been saying about the names derogatory nature since the 60s.

The Blackhorse ruling will not stop the Washington team from continuing to sell its wide range of Redskins merchandise and current trademarks will remain in effect during the litigation process brought by the Washington organization. Redskins President Bruce Allen has stated that the organization would appeal the June 2014 ruling because they are convinced they will win, "as the facts and the law are on our side of the franchise that has proudly used the name Washington Redskins for more than 80 years" (Shapira, 2015a). However, if the ruling

withstands the lengthy appeals process, it would deny the Washington organization protection from counterfeit merchandise, sporting the Redskins logo, flooding the market. While it hardly seems like the intent of those who brought the suit against the organization would be to create an abundance of more Redskins merchandise, a lack of protection against counterfeit products could hit the organization where it may potentially cause the biggest response, their pocketbooks.

Indeed, the Blackhorse ruling runs parallel to other efforts to bring pressure against the Redskins mascot. In May 2014, some 50 members of Congress proposed legislation that would strip the NFL of its nonprofit status if the league continued using the offensive name (Maske, 2014). Also in May, both houses of the New York State legislature passed a resolution calling for all professional sports leagues to stop using racial slurs, specifically citing the Redskins team as an example (ICTMNS, 2014a). In June, the Yocha Dehe Tribe aired a TV commercial against the Washington Redskins team during the NBA finals, and its subsequent posting on YouTube has seen more than 3 million views (National Congress of American Indians, 2014). Their video titled “Proud to Be” focuses on how Native Americans describe themselves as many things but that there is one thing they are not, Redskins. In addition, a July 2014 report titled “Missing the Point: The Real Impact of Native Mascots and Team Names on American Indian and Alaska Youth” from the Center for American Progress found that racist names and mascots can create an “unwelcome and hostile learning environment” (CAP, 2014) for young American Indian and Alaska Native children. Data published in September 2014 by Halbritter’s Change the Mascot campaign showed that even some broadcasters for the NFL have taken note of the growing movement against the Washington team and have reduced or eliminated their use of the Redskins name on air.

Since the 2014 Blackhorse ruling the Washington organization has gone through one round of litigation regarding their trademarks registrations in which U.S. District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee upheld the previous ruling and added that he couldn't understand why the team had ever thought that Redskin was an acceptable name, as Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defined the word as "often contemptuous" back in 1898. While there is no doubt that the organization will continue to focus its efforts on continuing the appeal process, it may be that some people are finally beginning to take note of the growing support to change Native American sports imagery. Following Lee's ruling the Cheyenne River Sioux, a South Dakota tribe, voted in August 2015 to reject a \$25,000 offer from the Redskins foundation established to help Indians and a Montana-based Native American rodeo competition severed its previous ties with the Redskins Original Americans Foundation, backed by the Washington franchise, because of the team's continued use of the racial slur. Most recently Governor Jerry Brown (D) of California signed the California Racial Mascots Act on October 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 which outlaws schools' use of the Redskin as a team name for all California public schools. Although Washington, Oregon, Wisconsin, Colorado, South Dakota, and Tennessee have all made efforts to either ban or restrict public schools in their states from using Native American names, symbols, or images as school mascots, California's ban starting in 2017 will be the first of its kind at the state wide level and has the potential to cause a cascading effect amongst other states (Change the Mascot, 2015d). Such examples provide a partial glimpse into the growing dissatisfaction with the Washington franchise and the Redskins mascot in recent years.

This brief history of the Redskins controversy shows some of the main arguments used by those who advocate for the elimination of Native American mascots. However, too often the discussion is reduced to issues of offensiveness and racism. While this is certainly an important

part of the controversy regarding Native American mascots, such a reductionist perspective limits an understanding of the extent to which such names, images, and mascots matter. A perspective that focuses exclusively upon the racist claims of the opposition and the counter claims of supporters excludes the extent to which mascots are taken from a historical context that ignores contemporary Native American populations at large. Indeed, one could argue that apart from Redskins other common identifiers of Native mascots such as “Indians,” “Braves,” “Chiefs,” and even “Warriors” which are not as overtly derogatory in nature are just as important to eliminate as well. The consistent depiction of Native Americans as mighty warriors serves in part to maintain the stereotype of the historical “bloodthirsty savage.” Such a problematic perspective limits an understanding of Native Americans that is cemented firmly in the past.

Conversely, defenders of Native Americans mascots argue that their use of Native American names and images honor Native American people and serve as a tribute to the important qualities of Native peoples. Frequently, those advocating for the continued use of Native American mascots argue that the mascot is part of the tradition of their school. According to Shepard (1991) it is not uncommon to hear supporters of Native American mascots claim “I can think of no greater tribute to the American Indian than to name a team’s warriors after courageous, cunning---and feared---warriors of the Indian nations, the braves” (p.14). Indeed, many believe that Native American mascots honor the very Indian peoples they stereotype. The idea that Native American mascots memorialize, honor and pay respect to Native peoples is a recurrent theme among supporters, regardless of the specific nature of the name and the level at which the team competes. Even former President Jimmy Carter argued in response to the 1991 World Series protests, “With the Braves on top, we have a brave, courageous, and successful team, and I think we can look on the American Indians as brave, successful and attractive. So I

don't look at it as an insult" (Miller, 1999, p.196-7). The idea that mascots stand for something much broader is a major part of the controversies over mascots in general and the Redskins in particular.

### **Research Questions**

This project builds in part on Black's (2002) identification of synecdoches as an important aspect of understanding the public controversies surrounding Native American mascots. The Washington Redskins provide a compelling example to examine how synecdochal form maintains and complicates the controversy surrounding the most derogatory of Native American mascots. In order to account for the manner in which such an approach adds to our current understanding, this project will attempt to address the following research questions:

- What synecdoches are evident in recent public controversy over the Redskin mascot?
- How do these synecdoches construct the meaning of the Redskin mascot for competing sides in the controversy?
- How do the competing constructions of the Redskin reflect the underlying values of each side and what does it tell us about the respective social truths being advocated by each side?
- To what extent do the representations of the Redskin mascot enable or inhibit productive resolutions to the controversy?

In order to answer the research questions proposed above, I will require the assistance of the previously mentioned rhetorical concepts, primarily synecdoche and ideographs, which when taken together often produce representational ideographs. From my initial analysis of documents, elements of synecdoche and ideographs are central to the controversy over the Redskins mascot, justifying the appropriateness of such concepts for this study.

### **Summary of Artifacts**

In order to answer the previously proposed research questions, I will focus my analysis on the Redskin as representational ideograph in synecdochal form. I have chosen to focus on the reinvigorated movement to force the Washington organization to change their mascot and will examine public discourse surrounding the controversy on both sides, starting in 2013 and extending through 2015. As noted above, 2013 is a significant year because it saw increased public efforts to campaign against the Redskins mascot. My artifacts include the campaign materials produced by Ray Halbritter's Change the Mascot campaign as well as those provided by the Washington Redskins organization to defend the continued use of the mascot. Additionally, I will look at prominent editorials produced by the Native American focused publications of Indian Country Today Media Network, as well as those produced by the Washington Post and Washington Times. I chose the Washington papers since they are produced in the locale of the controversy and have published more than 100 op-eds on the issue during this time period. It is my hope that such a breadth of artifacts should provide a more complete perspective regarding how the two sides of the controversy articulate their respective positions and that an analysis of the synecdochal development of the Redskin will reveal the competing social realities based around their respectively constructed representational ideographs.

### **Précis of Chapters**

In the following chapters I first look at the efforts made by the Change the Mascot organization as well as those groups and individuals who also oppose the mascot, in their attempts to force the Washington football team to change their mascot. I examine how the anti-Redskin discourse establishes a particular ideographical construction of the Redskin in which the mascot is represents a continued attempt to control Indian identity and marginalize the

Indigenous voice. In turn, the subsequent chapter looks at the discourse of the Washington Redskins organization as well as its supporters in terms of what they argue the Redskin means to them. I show how that discourse revolves around the concepts of honor, tradition, and tribute, giving specific focus to how those terms constitute a different and competing ideographical representation. In order to defend the particular ideographs which are being used by Change the Mascot and the Washington Redskins organization I examine a number of synecdoches which both sides use in order to support their particular ideographs. In the final chapter I explore how differing ideographical constructions for the Redskins results in competing representations which contributes in part to maintaining and prolonging the controversy. It is my hope that an analysis of the ideographical and synecdochal constructions made regarding both sides of the controversy will contribute to a more complete understanding of the particular manner in which such representations may function to ensure that the controversy remains unresolved.



## **Chapter Two: “Change the Mascot” and the Rhetoric of Mascot Opponents**

In this chapter I explore the discourse produced from within Change the Mascot and the Oneida Indian Nation of New York. I also examine the extent to which their arguments are reproduced throughout op-eds from The Washington Post, The Washington Times, and Indian Country Today Media Network ranging from 2013 through 2015. Such analyses of artifacts illuminate the ideological underpinnings and key issues which are addressed by Change the Mascot’s campaign.

The primary purpose of the Oneida Indian Nation’s Change the Mascot campaign to pressure the NFL and the Washington Redskins organization to stop using “Redskins” as the name and logo for the Washington football team. Change the Mascot sees the Redskins mascot as an insensitive and unacceptable form of racial language. The campaign’s arguments are grounded in multiple synecdoches that interpret the mascot as indicative or representative of larger social problems related to treatment of Native Americans, which position removal of the mascot as an affirmation of values of equality and mutual respect. The use of synecdoche to connect the mascot to broader values turns the mascot into a representational ideograph, and helps the Change the Mascot campaign by becoming organization principles for the debate as well as key elements in the social discourse surrounding opponents who wish to see the name changed.

Like all ideographs, people construct a meaning for equality, “by using the word as a description” of some phenomenon (McGee, 1980, p.10). Indeed, the particular ideographic use “has meaning only insofar as” its description is both “acceptable” and “believable” (McGee, 1980, p.10). In order to keep the notion of the Redskins as a threat to equality coherent, it is necessary for Change the Mascot to connect this threat to the greater public. By analyzing

supportive op-eds in various media outlets, we can observe the extent to which those authors draw upon the same synecdoches and ideographs to make their arguments. Indeed, in defense of this project, it is necessary to highlight the particular manner in which supportive op-eds embrace the message from Change the Mascot and draw upon those same synecdoches in defense of their own arguments. In order to highlight the discourse of supporters and opponents alike and the degree to which they accept or challenge the key elements of Change the Mascot's position, I also examined op-eds from Indian Country Today Media Network, The Washington Post, and The Washington Times from 2013 up through 2015.

Rather than examining the selected artifacts individually, I chose to examine them based upon the synecdoches which were being employed in each of them as part of the larger ideograph of <equality>. As a result what follows is first a discussion of how the mascot is associated with the ideograph of <equality> under which a variety of synecdoches support and emphasize the ideology underlying Change the Mascot's campaign messages. Indeed, in this chapter I find that the rhetors position <equality> as the organizing principle from which other opponents who are in favor of changing the Washington Redskins mascot can unite behind. As part of their decision to employ <equality>, the rhetors seek to educate, empower, and encourage other opponents to take action towards supporting the call for the Washington football organization to change its derogatory name. While <equality> serves as the organizing principle for those who identify with Change the Mascot's message, it is equally important to explore how Change the Mascot's synecdoches are reinforced by other voices and resonate with <equality>.

### **Redskins lack of <equality>**

With its primary goal being to garner additional pressure on the Washington Redskins football organization to change the name, Change the Mascot focuses on conceptualizing the

Redskins in a synecdochic form in order to affirm the values of equality and mutual respect, or threat to those ideals. While there are several different synecdoches at work in the Change the Mascot movement, the overarching emphasis is placed upon the continued use of a racial slur “Redskins” as a symbol of the lack of equality and mutual respect that Native Americans experience in continuing to be treated as mascots rather than people. When the Redskins is given status as a representation of inequality, it is transformed from one term, or “title,” into a “Title of titles” (Moore, 1994, p.436). As an ultimate term, then, the Redskins ideograph as developed by the Change the Mascot campaign “controls” power and “shapes” reality for those who support the movement to change the name (Burke, 1970, p.183). Indeed, it is through its ideographic associations that the Change the Mascot summarizes its commitment to <equality> as a symbol for the campaign.

As a representational ideograph, the Redskins name becomes an image for a host of terms related to respect, such as equality, inclusion, tolerance, and civility. By emphasizing a part of inequality (the continued use of Redskins as mascots) to indicate the state of inequality as a whole, the Change the Mascot campaign constitutes their demand to eliminate the use of the Redskins mascot as a necessary action for achieving equality. Indeed, by describing the effect of the continued use of the Redskins mascot as a threat to equality, Change the Mascot develops its overall argument that assigns its continued use as the problem (causing a lack of equality), and renders the Redskins as a synecdoche for inequality, which is to be destroyed.

Based heavily upon that argument, Change the Mascot characterizes the complex issue of the continued use of Native American imagery and terms as mascots with a rhetoric that attacks the part in name of the whole. Change the Mascot’s campaign encourages people to treat everyone respectfully, and to see changing the name of the Redskins as part of that inspiration.

Furthermore, Change the Mascot notes that “the fight to change Washington’s team name, then, is a larger fight to finally say that in a 21<sup>st</sup> century America that values mutual respect and civility over subjugation and hostility” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Moreover, Change the Mascot is consistent in arguing that “no group deserves to be treated as targets of a racial slur,” (Change the Mascot, 2013i) and furthermore, that it is time to stand on the “right side of history” and create “a better historical legacy of tolerance and mutual respect” (Change the Mascot, 2013e).

Changing the name therefore becomes a part-for-whole relationship in which changing the name converts the idea of inequality into the Redskins and the Redskins into the idea of inequality. Ray Halbritter argues that the Native Americans have learned that the rest of America sees them not as “individual human beings or fellow Americans, but as people that didn’t deserve to be treated as equals” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Furthermore, Halbritter argues that “at every turn, we have been told that we do not deserve the most basic forms of respect” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). He continues this argument by acknowledging that “this is not just a civil rights issue, it is a moral issue” and that supporting a name change is an attempt to “help us turn the page on this chapter of history and pursue the path of inclusion and mutual respect” (Change the Mascot, 2013j). Indeed, part of Change the Mascot’s ideograph of respect and equality for Native Americans is reiterated in every radio ad that the campaign has run thus far when each ends with the call that “no one deserves to be treated with racial slurs we deserve to be treated as what we are: Americans” (Change the Mascot, 2013d). Here the ideograph of equality expands to include the term Americans in order to emphasize that modern society agrees this kind of language is unacceptable in America.

As support grows for the movement, Change the Mascot has opportunistically taken advantage of this by calling attention to the fact that other groups have sent a powerful message to the NFL, that “no group deserves to be targets of a racial slur” (Change the Mascot, 2013i). Again, while the issue of any racial demographic being used as mascots remains exclusive to Native Americans, Change the Mascot is simultaneously focused on emphasizing the connection between defending Native Americans and an acknowledgement that no one deserves to be treated as the subject of such slurs. Furthermore, in their Civil Rights radio spot, Change the Mascot stresses that changing the name of the Redskins is in keeping with the ideals of “respect and dignity for all people” (Change the Mascot, 2014a). Following United Nations special rapporteur James Anaya’s statement acknowledging that Redskins is recognized through the globe as a racial slur, Change the Mascot reiterated Anaya’s comments that all “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations” (Change the Mascot, 2014b). Here the emphasis on all Indigenous peoples creates an additional connection which plays upon a universally shared ideology from which the Redskins debate, while an issue specific to those Indigenous peoples of North America, can be seen as a part to whole issue for all the Indigenous peoples of the world.

In an attempt to include yet another synecdochal connection to their ideograph of equality and respect, Change the Mascot plays upon the connection that the Washington franchise has to the city of D.C. and how it represents America’s capital. Indeed, as part of a January 2015 phone campaign urging supporters of the name change in D.C. to call the NFL and back a name change, the campaign calls for fans to demonstrate “our commitment to the ideals of equality and civility” (Change the Mascot, 2015a). Ultimately, the representational ideograph of the Redskins that Change the Mascot is advocating for is one in which multiple synecdoches are employed in

order to strengthen and reaffirm the ideograph of <equality> that our nation was built upon and should continue to strive for. Indeed, as 2015 drew to a close with California enacting a statewide ban on Redskins mascots in public school, Change the Mascot made sure to emphasize that California is “a shining example for other states across the country, and for the next generation, by demonstrating a commitment to the American ideals of inclusion and mutual respect” (Change the Mascot, 2015d).

While Change the Mascot uses multiple synecdoches in order to expand the breadth of its argument, certain synecdochal relationships have more resonance with the larger public. Indeed, among the public discourse surrounding the Redskins name debate, other opponents of the mascot relied most on the equality and respect synecdoche and the Americans synecdoche, with less attention given to the synecdoches of our nation’s capital and the NFL as a global brand.

### **Redskins as sign of inequality**

Most significantly, the Change the Mascot campaign defines the Redskin as an open acknowledgment of the lack of equality, mutual respect, and civility that the dominant culture holds towards Native Americans. By emphasizing how the racial epithet of the Redskins indicates the lack of equality as a whole for Native American peoples, the Change the Mascot campaign reinforces the idea that no group deserves to be treated as the target of racial slurs, including Native Americans. In their “Bipartisan” radio ad, Change the Mascot’s Ray Halbritter proclaims that ultimately “we aren’t asking for anything more than simple respect” (Change the Mascot, 2013d). In describing the effect of the continued use of the Redskins mascot as a threat to equality and the right to be treated with mutual respect, the Change the Mascot campaign develops an overall argument that assigns the continued use of racial slurs towards any group of individuals as the problem, and renders the Redskins as a synecdoche for the lack of equality

experienced by Native Americans. According to Change the Mascot, our national history is scarred by the language of bigotry. While modern society agrees that this kind of language is unacceptable, there are still some holdouts such as Washington's NFL team. The synecdochic construct here stresses the relationship between the Redskins and the basic notions of equality, respect, and civility for all Americans.

Additionally, their "Inspire" ad focuses on strengthening the commitment to equality that Change the Mascot's campaign represents by highlighting those individuals who have already voiced their support for Change the Mascot. The ad begins with an acknowledgement that the Washington City Council, some members of Congress, The Washington Post, and some Native American groups have already spoken out for changing the name. In particular, "Inspire" centers around the opportunity that in response to the NFL Commissioners call to listen to those who are offended, "changing the name of the Washington team can inspire and encourage people to treat everyone respectfully" (Change the Mascot, 2013c). Furthermore, according to Amy Trask, former Oakland Raiders President, and Ray Halbritter who can both be heard in the ad, the time is right "for a change" to occur that says "Native peoples should not be disparaged" (Change the Mascot, 2013c).

While the issue is sometimes portrayed by Change the Mascot as a civil rights issue by highlighting the degree to which "the word 'redskins' is deeply hurtful to Native Americans" (Change the Mascot, 2013b), their fourth spot extends the issue to claim that Change the Mascot argues that "no one deserves to be treated with racial slurs" (Change the Mascot, 2013d). As such, the issue is being portrayed not just as a civil rights issue, but also a moral one, one that will hopefully spur a path of inclusion and mutual respect by turning the page on this chapter of history. A second October radio ad titled "Legacy," highlights the Washington Redskins history

regarding racial integration before the name was change from Braves to Redskins in 1933. Indeed, the ad argues that “For all of its storied history, Washington’s NFL team will always remain as the last team to permit integration. That was the legacy of the former team owner Preston Marshall... who decided to use a racial slur as the team’s name” (Change the Mascot, 2013e). Furthermore, in this ad Change the Mascot argues that in changing the name Snyder and the Washington Redskins organization can create a better historical legacy, one of “tolerance and mutual respect” (Change the Mascot, 2013e) as opposed to the segregationist and racist history of the current Washington football team. As part of this part-for-whole relationship, the continued use of the Redskins mascot highlights a continued acceptance of the slandering of an entire group of people, which converts the idea of inequality in America into the Redskins mascot and the continued use of the mascot as an acceptance of racial supremacy.

Indeed, Oneida Indian Nation representative Ray Halbritter’s remarks at the United South and Eastern Tribes’ annual meeting in Cherokee, North Carolina, mimic many of the arguments expressed by the Change the Mascot radio ads. In that speech previewing a meeting with top NFL officials only two days later, Ray Halbritter notes that “Dan Snyder insist[s] that their supposed right to target, intimidate and persecute people on the basis of their alleged skin color inherently negates the right of others to be free of such persecution” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Halbritter continues, “the fight to change Washington’s team name, then, is a larger fight to finally say that in a 21<sup>st</sup> century America that values of mutual respect and civility over subjugation and hostility, such a cynical assumption is no longer acceptable” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Indeed, Halbritter argues that Native Americans only learned what being deemed a Redskin meant as they were being thrown off their land and herded onto reservations. According to Halbritter, “they learned it when that word was screamed at them... and they



learned it then – as we all do now – when anytime they raise objections to being slurred they are told to sit down, shut up and stay in their place” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Furthermore, at every turn Native Americans have been told “we do not deserve the most basic forms of respect” (Change the Mascot, 2013f).

Halbritter also addresses inequality by expressing his concern with the “serious cultural, political and public health consequences” (Change the Mascot, 2013f) on Native American peoples. Indeed, a report from the Center for American Progress (CAP) cites the destructive public health consequences for Native American families and children, such as that “these team names and mascots can establish an unwelcome and hostile learning environment for AI/AN (American Indian/ Alaska Native) students” (Center for American Progress, 2014). Furthermore, the report details how the presence of such mascots “directly results in lower self-esteem and mental health” for American Indian and Alaska native adolescents and young adults and just as importantly how these mascots “undermine the educational experience of all students, particularly those with little or no contact with indigenous [peoples]” (Center for American Progress, 2014).

Continuing their emphasis on mutual respect and equality, Change the Mascot’s (2013h) “Legends” radio spot acknowledges that sports have always led the fight for equality in America and that in the spirit of “mutual respect,” it is time for the Washington football team to change their name. Again, Change the Mascot proclaims that no group deserves to be treated as a target of racial epithets. Another Change the Mascot (2013i) ad titled “Thanks” takes advantage of the Thanksgiving holiday by celebrating the ideals of mutual respect between Native Americans and their surrounding communities. Indeed, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, the ad “express[es] our gratitude to everyone who has stood up in support of an important civil rights issue” and

moreover, that Change the Mascot is “deeply thankful that this moral and civil right issue has expanded into a national debate” (Change the Mascot, 2013i). Again, the Redskin in synecdochal form is expressed by Change the Mascot as a call towards mutual respect “In the spirit of mutual respect, it is time for the Washington NFL team to change its name” (Change the Mascot, 2013h). Throughout the entirety of Change the Mascot’s campaign, the call for the equal treatment of Native Americans and that no group deserves to be treated as targets of a racial slur, is something the Oneida Indian Nation revisits again and again as part of their campaign to gain supporters.

In response to Change the Mascot’s call for equality regarding the Redskins mascot issue, certain op-eds chose to embrace Change the Mascot’s message of equality by recognizing the issue as one that involves everyone, not just those Native Americans who felt the racial slur was derogatory. Indeed, some authors chose to embrace that particular message from Change the Mascot by drawing upon the equality synecdoche in defense of their own position which also opposes the Redskins mascot. For one Nathan Fenno, the issue is one in which continuing to debate the use of the Redskins name is representative of the fact that Redskins is “a slur on us all” (Fenno, 2013) by continuing to debate the issue. According to Michael Friedman, while writing for Indian Country Today, “Not only does the use of this slur risk causing direct damage to the mental and physical health of our country's Native American population, it also puts us all at risk for both participating in and being harmed by ongoing prejudice” (Friedman, 2013). Indeed, even before Change the Mascot launched its campaign in September of 2013 it appears that individuals were already aware of the effect that the continued use of Redskins has on all peoples. According to Hakim Muhammad, of the Coalition of Prince George’s County Leaders

and Organizations for the NAACP, “when you have a name that is disparaging to any nation of people, it affects all of us. Period” (Vargas, 2013a).

As hundreds gathered outside the Mall of America Field in Minneapolis in November 2013 to protest the Washington Redskins’ name, it appears that some protestors had already embraced Change the Mascot’s message of equality. Indeed, for one unnamed American Indian Movement organizer, he expressed that those individuals protesting the name were all there “to look for respect for all people” (Maske, 2013). Even Native American superstar basketball player Shoni Schimmel appears to embrace this message, when she said in support of changing that name, that it “would help give us, as Native Americans, the same equality that every other race wants” (ICTMNS, 2013a). It appears that amongst the public support for changing the Redskins name, the focus on equality that Change the Mascot has been advocating for is being taken up by its supporters as an integral part of reinforcing that the Redskins name is a continual reminder that Native Americans are denied the ideals of equality, civility, and mutual respect. Moreover, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights issued a statement regarding the need for the NFL to change the name of the Washington franchise and that its continued use represents “that an attack on the civil rights of one set of people is an attack on the civil rights of all people” (ICTMNS, 2013b).

### **Redskins are not Americans**

While a part for whole relationship has been highlighted with regard to the Redskins as a symbol for the inequality of Native Americans, Change the Mascot advocates for another part to whole relationship in drawing out the connection that Native Americans deserve to be treated as what they are, Americans. In their very first ad, Change the Mascot focuses on the argument that Native Americans “don’t deserve to be called redskins” (Change the Mascot, 2013a) but instead

that they are a part of the larger whole of Americans. Indeed, as the first inhabitants of what has become known as the United States of America, Change the Mascot draws out the relationship that Native Americans should be treated as Americans with the values of mutual respect and inclusion. Nearly every single radio ad sponsored by the Change the Mascot campaign ends with those exact words “we want to be treated as what we all are: Americans” (Change the Mascot, 2013a). In drawing out the relationship between being treated as Redskins versus being treated as Americans, Change the mascot creates a synecdoche in which changing the mascot is about treating “Redskins” as Americans in particular and treating Native Americans as Americans in general.

In Halbritter’s October speech, he relates that while Native Americans were learning what it meant to be called Redskin, they were seen “not as individual human beings or fellow Americans, but as people that didn’t deserve to be treated as equals” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Furthermore, Halbritter argues that “in short, [we have] been treated not as humans or fellow Americans, but as Redskins” (Change the Mascot, 2013f). The important connection to highlight here is that Redskins symbolizes the lack of humanity and recognition *as Americans* that Native Americans are denied. Every week, on billboards, t-shirts, hats, and millions of TV screens individuals are told that Natives Americans are not Americans but Redskins. According to Halbritter, the fight to change Washington’s team name, then, is part of a larger fight to finally say that “in a 21<sup>st</sup> century *America* that values of mutual respect and civility over subjugation and hostility” (Change the Mascot, 2013f, emphasis mine) and that in continuing to allow the Washington team to use the Redskins as their mascot is an affront to Native Americans as Americans. Again, their claim is that “no Americans should be treated as targets of racial slurs – and no fans or players should be forced to support such slurs as a condition of supporting a sports

team” (Change the Mascot, 2015b). In continuing the Redskins name for the Washington football team it serves in part as an open acknowledgment that Native Americans are treated as anything but Americans, including their right to be excluded as targets of a racial epithet.

As support for the Change the Mascot campaign grows, the campaign adjusts their radio and TV spots to reflect that these supporters are saying “Native Americans deserve to be treated as what we are: Americans” (Change the Mascot, 2013i). In a press release acknowledging the state of California’s decision to ban Redskins mascot statewide in public schools, Change the Mascot highlights California’s commitment to the “American ideals of inclusion and mutual respect” (Change the Mascot, 2015d). The importance of the relationship here is in the connection it makes to those who support the name and that their support is an example of a continued rejection to treat Native Americans as equals.

Insofar as the equality synecdoche was adopted by some media outlets as a means to voice their opposition against the Redskins mascot, Change the Mascot’s synecdoche of Redskins as un-American was also embraced by some sources and drawn upon in defense of particular claims. For example, Eleanor Holmes Norton argues in support of Change the Mascot, that there can be no argument for retaining a name “that directly insults Americans and especially our first Americans” (Vargas and Maske, 2013). Hakim Muhammad expressed a similar sentiment when he proclaimed that the issue over the Redskins name “is an American issue” (Vargas, 2013a). Indeed, it appears that supporters of the movement agree with Change the Mascot’s argument that the continued use of Redskins is representative of the way in which Native Americans are treated as less than American. Moreover, in response to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ruling that the term Redskins is derogatory and disparaging towards

Native Americans, Amanda Blackhorse called the decision a “great victory for Native Americans and all Americans” (McElhatton, 2014).

The uptake here is that some of the public agrees with the extent to which the Redskins in synecdochic form represent the degree to which Native Americans are treated as less than American. According to Francoise Mouly, The New Yorker’s art director, the issue is “appalling” when you realize that “you [Native Americans] don’t have the protections that American citizens have” (Cavna, 2014). In voicing her support for the NAACP’s call for Washington to change their derogatory slur of a nickname Hilary O. Shelton, director of the NAACP’s Washington Bureau, said “what affects one of us, affects all of us,” and continued, “this is not someone else’s problem; this is everyone’s problem” (Vargas, 2013b). Moreover, while these supporters acknowledge the synecdoche between Redskins as being un-American they are also connecting it to the larger ideograph of equality and mutual respect that is at the core of the Change the Mascot campaign.

### **Redskins as the face of our nation’s capital and thereby our country**

Change the Mascot’s (2013d) “Bipartisan” radio ad highlights that the football team of our nation’s capital should not be represented with a racial slur. This synecdochal relationship between the Redskins team and the nation’s capital is highlighted in additional radio spots. A December 2013 “Moral Issue” ad focuses in part on Reverend Graylan Hagler’s testimony as a member of the Washington area-clergy who “feel[s] a responsibility to stand up for the Biblical principles of love, dignity, respect, and compassion” (Change the Mascot, 2013j). Indeed, Hagler claims more than twenty years worth of support for changing the Redskins slur. This synecdochal, part to whole relationship in which the Redskins are representative of the Nation’s capital reinforces the equality synecdoche.

In their January “Civil Rights” ad, Change the Mascot defends that the residents of the capital of our nation “have always tried to set an example for tolerance and mutual respect,” and that “in keeping with our city’s respect for the dignity of all people” (Change the Mascot, 2014a) the Washington football team should change the mascot. The synecdochic construct here stresses the relationship not only between Redskins and mutual respect, but also the relationship between the Redskins and our nation’s capital. Because DC has “always tried to set an example for tolerance and mutual respect” (Change the Mascot, 2014a), the existence of the Redskins mascot and its destructive and divisive message about Native American violates what the capital represents. In a place that is supposed to represent a unifying force in American history and home to the civil rights movement, the call for the Washington football team to change the mascot becomes one in which the very historical importance of D.C. as a source of equality and mutual respect amongst all peoples is highlighted for all Americans. According to Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, “The Washington football team should change the mascot and make the name of our team a source of pride that honors D.C.’s tradition of respect for all Americans” (Change the Mascot, 2014a).

Because the Redskins as Washington’s football team are a symbol of America’s capital, Change the Mascot and its supporters argue that “it’s time we demonstrate our commitment to the ideals of equality and civility” (Change the Mascot, 2015a). As part of a January 2015 phone campaign, Washington football fans urged local supporters of the Change the Mascot campaign to call the NFL and express their desire for the need to change the name. The script for callers begins with an acknowledgement that “we represent America’s capital; and it’s time we demonstrate our commitment to the ideals of equality and civility” (Change the Mascot, 2015a). Without the name, it is still D.C. football and fans of the Washington football team can remain

fans while recognizing the need for a mascot that doesn't alienate and offend. In the concluding remarks each call ends the same way they began, by urging those who represent America's capital to demonstrate "our commitment to the ideals of equality and civility" (Change the Mascot, 2015a).

The connection between the Redskins and D.C. is reinforced in Change the Mascot's "Take it Away" TV spot in which they digitally remove all representations of the mascot from game day footage. The spot, which shows former Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III rushing for a touchdown and jumping into the stands to celebrate with fans, claims that if you take away the mascot it's still Washington football, but that in keeping the mascot, the Washington team's ownership is forcing fans and players to support a dictionary defined racial slur (National Congress of American Indians, 2015). This ad highlights how the Redskins mascot in particular need not represent the capitol as a whole, and that despite a name change it would still be Washington football and would more closely represent our nation's capital as home to the ideal of equality for all. Furthermore, Change the Mascot maintains that "fans and players shouldn't be put in that position [of blind support for the team]. They should be able to root for a team that honors the most basic notions of civility and respect" (Change the Mascot, 2015b). While the synecdoche of the Redskins and equality is reinforced throughout these spots an additional connection is made between the Redskins as a symbol of our Nation's capital and the relationship to D.C.'s respect for the dignity of all people in the struggle for equality.

Although it has not seen as widespread an uptake in the public discourse surrounding the call to change the Redskins mascot, the synecdoche of the Redskins as representative of the nation's capital and simultaneously unrepresentative of the D.C.'s tradition of respect for all Americans has seen some recognition amongst Change the Mascot's supporters in media outlets.



Several op-eds embrace the synecdoche of the Redskins as the face of our nation's capital and draw upon that connection in defense of their own oppositional position. For example, Robert Holden, deputy director for the National Congress of American Indians, voiced that he could not "in good conscience support the local football team" (Somers, 2013) due in part to the effect that the Redskins continued use denies a sense of community for Native Americans in the nation's capital. Furthermore, what bothers some local supporters the most is that "in a city filled with symbols that reflect the nation's values the name of the football team does the opposite" (Vargas and Shin, 2013).

While those opponents acknowledged that a name change will not solve many of the problems regarding the history of broken treaties, promises, and the discriminatory isolation of Native American communities, "a change in the nation's capital can send a strong message" (Vargas, 2014a). In particular, Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District's nonvoting member of Congress, in reiterating her support for the Change the Mascot campaign stated that the District is "much too progressive a city to be associated with a title that was officially found to be a racial slur" (Somers, 2014). Although the extent to which this synecdoche is accepted and adopted by the public is significantly less than the previous synecdoche it is nonetheless important that within the larger discourse. There is still a degree of resonance with the public when it comes to the connection between our nation's capital in regard to its values and traditions and how the Redskins fail to represent that tradition.

### **Redskins as a symbol of the NFL**

In highlighting the relationship between the Redskins mascot as a symbol of our Nation's capital Change the Mascot simultaneously recognizes the important role that the NFL plays as a representative for all of America. Indeed, Change the Mascot and the Oneida Indian Nation

conceptualize that the continued use of the slur Redskins is undermining the position that the NFL has as a unifying force in America. For millions of people, the Washington team's racist name is the most explicit and direct contact with the very idea of Native American culture. However, as many of Change the Mascot's dozen or so radio and TV ads proclaim, "as a proud supporter of the NFL we want the league to be a unifying force, not a source of intolerance" (Change the Mascot, 2013g).

For some, football may be nothing more than just a game, but such a claim ignores the significant role of the NFL in our society. Indeed, in Halbritter's speech prior to meeting with top NFL officials, proclaims that as a \$9-billion business the NFL is arguably "the single most powerful cultural force in American, which makes it one of the most powerful cultural forces on the globe" (Change the Mascot, 2013f). Furthermore, Change the Mascot argues that in holding such an important status in the global market, the NFL needs to contribute "to the positive image of the United States across the world" by stopping its open promotion of the Redskins slur (Change the Mascot, 2014b). For example, Change the Mascot's September (2014c) radio ad asks those groups and individuals who support Change the Mascot for help in "call[ing] your local newspaper, local sports talk radio station and local television station and tell[ing] them to not use the R-word when reporting on the Washington team" (Change the Mascot, 2014c) in supporting their belief that Native Americans do not deserve to be openly slurred every Sunday for the entire world to see. In highlighting the Redskins as a symbol of the NFL, Change the Mascot also appeals to the League's desire to expand internationally. Change the Mascot use this NFL synecdoche to leverage the League against the Redskins and pressure the team to drop the mascot. They do this by asserting that the team name is becoming a "crisis" for the NFL as a

whole especially considering their “critical role in shaping the perceptions and views of millions of fans in America and around the globe” (Change the Mascot, 2015e).

In Change the Mascot’s July (2015c) press release congratulating the cancellation of Redskins trademarks, they describe Washington’s decision to ignore the will of an increasingly diverse country and challenge the ruling as a crisis for the NFL as a whole. Change the Mascot argues that the league’s refusal to use its power to change the Redskins name turns its “silence into active complicity, associating itself with those who believe people of color deserved to be slurred” (Change the Mascot, 2015c). Indeed, they present the issue with the Washington team’s name as a problem not only for Native Americans but also for the NFL organization at large, creating a “national spectacle by defending racial slurs” (Change the Mascot, 2015c). As the NFL seeks to expand to a more global market, with franchises potentially expanding to London, England, Change the Mascot argues the NFL “has decided to go on the world stage and promote an ugly racial epithet slurring indigenous people all over the world” (Change the Mascot, 2015e).

In response to the comments made by United Nations Special Rapporteur James Anaya that the Redskins mascot is a “hurtful reminder of past suffering of Native American[s]” and Ray Halbritter’s January 2014 meeting with the UN on the topic, Halbritter exclaimed that “The United Nations is the latest to dispel the absurd claim... that the term ‘redskins’ honor Native Americans” (Change the Mascot, 2014b). The statement made by Anaya serves in part as a recognition that the term “Redskins” is globally understood as a racial slur, and that “If the NFL wants to be a global brand which contributes to the positive image of the United States across the world, it needs to stop promoting this slur and change the name” (Change the Mascot, 2014b). Indeed, Anaya highlights the relationship that the NFL maintains as a globally recognized brand in his claim that the NFL and “private actors also have responsibilities independently of the

States' obligation to promote and protect human rights," including "Indigenous peoples... right to dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations" (Change the Mascot, 2014b). According to Change the Mascot, the UN has taken a "strong stand globally to combat racism in sports" (Change the Mascot, 2014b) and that the NFL's decision to slur people of color at an international level does the exact opposite of showing respect for all Indigenous peoples.

A few other voices in media outlets embrace the NFL synecdoche in arguing against the mascot. In particular, Jackie Pata, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians wrote in response to 50 members of the Senate urging NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to change the Redskins name that "The NFL is a global brand, but if it wants to contribute to the positive image of the United States across the world, rather than callously promoting discrimination against Native Americans, then it must stop promoting this slur and finally change the name" (Boren, 2014). Furthermore, the staff at Indian Country Today Media Network wrote that "the NFL has violated its core principles" of "integrity and respect embodied in the NFL rules" (ICTMNS, 2014c) by allowing the Redskins continued use as Washington's team name. This begs the question of whether or not "Mr. Snyder is jeopardizing the welfare of the league by promoting an epithet against people of color" (Shapira, 2014).

Ultimately, this synecdoche is about the degree to which the NFL and its Washington franchise can act as a global brand and an international voice in the efforts to quell racism. The NFL is a considerable cultural force in America and for many internationally as well, and as one commentator put it, "Athletics are supposed to demonstrate the best of who we are" (Vargas, 2013b). Indeed, athletics has long provided opportunities to confront racism on a global scale; as such supporters of Change the Mascot argue that in changing the Redskins name the NFL has to

opportunity to “create a team logo that upholds the values that the NFL has said it supports” (ICTMNS, 2014d) from a name that demeans and misrepresents an entire ethnicity or culture.

### **Summary**

While there are varying degrees to which each synecdoche has been employed by the public, for opponents the Redskins mascot functions primarily as a representational ideograph that symbolizes a lack of and threat to <equality>. This representational ideograph has been an organizing principle for Change the Mascot’s position. Change the Mascot has used several synecdochic relationships in defense of their call for equality when it comes to the Redskins mascot, and supportive op-eds surrounding Change the Mascot reveal particular instances in which the message of Change the Mascot has been embraced and drawn upon by other opponents of the Redskins mascot. Indeed, the public’s uptake and use of these synecdoches show how public opinion has rallied behind Change the Mascot’s message of equality. Ultimately, it is the manner in which other voices have drawn upon and embraced the messages of Change the Mascot that explains how these multiple synecdoches function in part reinforce the idea of <equality> as an organizing principle for those who agree with Change the Mascot’s oppositional position.

Given my analysis of the discourse surrounding Change the Mascot and their message of <equality> in this chapter two, I now turn towards an analysis of the rhetoric produced from within the Redskins organization and its supporters in response to discourse produced by the Change the Mascot campaign.

### **Chapter Three: The Redskins Organization and the rhetoric of mascot supporters**

Turning now to address the discourse produced in response to Change the Mascot's message of <equality>, this chapter aims to explore how the Washington Redskins and its supporters orient their defense for the continued use of the mascot. In order to supplement the limited discourse produced from within the organization, I also examine the extent to which the organization's messages are adopted and reproduced in supportive op-eds. As with the previous chapter I again look at the arguments made by supporters, which were gathered, from The Washington Post, The Washington Times, and Indian Country Today Media Network ranging from 2013 through 2015.

Whereas Change the Mascot emphasizes the values of equality and mutual respect that Native Americans deserve, the Washington Redskins organization construes the mascot to represent a tradition of pride, honor, and tribute. By doing so, the mascot becomes a representational ideograph for both sides in the controversy. Change the Mascot uses <equality> as an organizing principle while the Redskins organization has organized their position behind their messages of <tradition>. Moreover, while Change the Mascot argues that the Redskins mascot is an unacceptable form of racial language, the Washington football team, including owner Daniel Snyder, maintain that the Redskins mascot "was, and continues to be, a badge of honor" (Snyder, 2013) throughout its more than 80 years of use. In response to Change the Mascot's decision to pressure a name change for the Washington franchise, the Redskins organization has responded by highlighting the longstanding tradition that the team has had while using the Redskins name and image. In much the same way that Change the Mascot uses particular synecdoches in order to connect their messages to <equality>, the Redskins employ similar devices in defense of their decision to continue using the mascot.

As with the previous chapter, I chose to examine the artifacts of supporters based upon which synecdoches were being used and how those synecdoches function as part of the larger representational ideograph of <tradition>. This chapter starts with a discussion of the ideograph of <tradition> as advocated by the Washington Redskins organization, and then it explores how certain synecdoches support and emphasize the <tradition> ideology being employed by the official discourse of the Washington Redskins organization. In this chapter I find that the rhetoric of supporters uses <tradition> as an organizing principle from which supporters can rally behind and voice their own arguments. Of equal importance to this chapter, however, is the manner in which the Redskins organization and its fan base challenge the discourse and synecdoches being advocated by the Change the Mascot campaign. As such, this chapter demonstrates how synecdoches and ideographs are used in ways that prolong the controversy and maintain a sense of ambiguity regarding opponent's positions.

### **Redskins as <tradition>**

In defending the position of keeping the Washington Redskins name, the organization itself as well as some alumni and diehard fans maintain that the Redskins mascot reaffirms the level of pride, strength, courage, and honor that the name bestows upon Native Americans as a compliment. While there are several different synecdoches at work within the discourse of those who support keeping the name, the Redskins organization maintains a particular emphasis upon the idea that “the team name is more of an honor to the brave American Indian tribes of the past than anything negative” (Rill, 2013). Insofar as this connection is accepted by other public voices, the Redskins moniker is given status as a representation of their tradition of honor and pride, it is transformed into a “God” or “Ultimate” term, under which that terms comes to “control” power and “shape” reality through a hierarchy that summarizes the political orientation

of supporters (Burke, 1970, p.183). As an ultimate or god term, then, the Redskins ideograph as developed by the Redskins organization itself summarizes its commitment to <tradition> as a symbol for supporters to rally behind.

As a representational ideograph the Redskins name becomes an image for a host of terms related to tradition, such as pride, tribute, strength, character, history, and honor. Synecdochal form is central to building this representational ideograph; the mascot represents these abstract values, and other synecdoches reinforce those values. Supporting the tradition by keeping the Redskins mascot symbolizes the honor that supporters claim to give to Native Americans as a whole. By describing that the Redskins name is meant to honor Native Americans but also serve as a symbol of that honor, the Redskins organization develops its overall argument that assigns threats to change the name as the problem (wanting to strip away that symbol of tradition), and renders the Redskins as a synecdoche for tradition, which is to be preserved or destroyed.

This argument is based heavily upon what the removal of the Redskins name would indicate if the mascot is perceived to be “prideful, historical, and a great tribute to those who are Native Americans” (Examiner, 2014). Indeed, an important part of the rhetoric in defending the Redskins name is the connection between Redskins being “a great tribute to history” (Examiner, 2014) and representing “the foundation of our country” (Jarrett, 2014). In turn, the Redskins organization maintains that the threat of changing the name is an attempt to remove the pride and heritage that the franchise has embodied for the 82 years it has used the name. In these ways, supporters use synecdochic form to encourage a belief in the tradition that the name shows for all Native American peoples in representing the qualities of strength, determination and spirit associated with Native Americans. Indeed, there is a consistent message that Redskins “was and



continues to be a badge of honor” (Snyder, 2013) and that “it would be more demeaning to them [Native Americans] if we made them change it” (KXLY, 2014).

The issue over changing the name then becomes one in which the attempt to force the Washington franchise to drop their Redskins moniker becomes a part-for-whole relationship in which keeping the name converts the importance of continuing traditions into the Redskins and the Redskins into an embodiment of that tradition. According to Redskinsfacts.com, the Redskins name “epitomizes all the noble qualities we admire about Native Americans” (The Facts, n.d.). Furthermore, some Native Americans agree in saying, “I am very proud to be a Redskin” (Byas, 2015) and that the names and images used by sporting teams like the Redskins “give Pride to hundreds of thousands of Native Americans” (Davidson, 2014b). This argument assumes that no reasonable person would chose to name a sporting team after something derogatory; after all, “most sports teams want to be known as strong, courageous and brave. Isn’t that what the majority of people who cheer for the Washington Redskins think of when they sing the team’s fight song” (Wood, 2014)?

Redskins supporters maintain that part of the honor for which the Redskins is representative of is based in its 82 year old history of the name. According to Robert Rides at the Door, Blackfeet tribal member and avid Redskins supporter, “The Washington Redskins elected to honor the unique heritage of the First Nations people” (Rides at the Door, 2014) when it adopted the name over 80 years ago. Indeed, Rides at the Door defends this perspective when he argues that the qualities of “Honor, Courage, Respect, Fighting Spirit and Unity [which] are terms that describe the qualities of Native Americans” are why the Washington franchise decided “what their team should be based upon” (Rides at the Door, 2014). For another avid supporter, the Redskins “symbolized American and the American Dream to many of us who aspired to

immigrate to the U.S. Freedom. Pride. Honor. Success. Nobility” (Ramadan, 2014). Ultimately, the synecdochic relationship here stresses not only that these connections can be made to the current Redskins mascot, but that that connection has existed for 82 years, reinforcing the notion of <tradition>.

The name and its continued use is viewed by supporters as something that “was always prideful” (The Associated Press, 2014) and furthermore that it brings a degree of pride that makes some Native Americans feel proud to see those images and mascots. Here, the part-for-whole relationship focuses on the tradition of honoring Native Americans which the Redskins mascot embodies for fans as well as Native Americans and moreover, that the name change represents a very real threat and attempt to end that tradition of pride and honor towards Native Americans. Indeed, for some supporters that threat embodies a very scary reality in which taking away the pride “we have in our nicknames and logos is just another step towards that goal of not assimilation but genocide” (Davidson, 2014a). Moreover, this extreme perspective is in defense of those Native Americans who see the Redskins name “as part of Native American identity” and that it has “become a symbol of survival and determination” (Angell, 2015).

Several synecdoches build upon the representational ideograph of <tradition> in advocating for the threat a name change poses to continuing the legacy and tradition of honoring Native American peoples as well as the Redskins franchise itself. As part of the continued effort by the Washington Redskins organization, fans, and alumni to support the name’s continued use, the ideograph of <tradition> advocates for continuing the legacy of the Redskins name by reaffirming the traditions of courage, strength, tribute, honor, and pride that the mascot represents. Indeed, as Dan Snyder maintains that Redskins continues to be a badge of honor, it appears that supporters agree that “the names of our ancestors should be recognized” (Angell,

2015), ‘Redskins’ should be a badge of honor and recognized for the tradition of “pride, courage and intelligence” (Brady, 2014a) that the team name stands for.

Similar to other ideographs, individuals construct meaning for <tradition> “by using the word as a description” of some phenomenon (McGee, 1980, p.10). As such, any particular ideograph “has meaning only insofar as” its description is deemed “acceptable” and “believable” by the public at large (McGee, 1980, p.10). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the public discourse surrounding those who defend the continued use of the name in order to understand the degree to which certain synecdoches are adopted by the public and reinforce the message that the Redskins organization has created. Again, I examined op-eds from Indian Country Today Media Network, the Washington Post, and the Washington Times from 2013 up through 2015 which covers the most recent developments surrounding the controversy.

Although the discourse of supporters is overall based in fewer synecdochal connections, when compared to Change the Mascot, an equally important part of understanding the discourse of supporters is the manner in which they challenge the synecdoches being used by Change the Mascot and other opponents of the Redskins mascot. Indeed, my analysis reveals in addition to strengthening their own supportive synecdoches, supporters have also tried to delegitimize some of the synecdoches being used by opponents. Several arguments used by supporters are focused on challenging the messages of Change the Mascot rather than in strengthening their own positions. As such, it is important to show the manner in which supporters not only adopt the <tradition> ideograph, but also how some supporters challenge the synecdoches of Change the Mascot with particular consideration given to how such discourse attempts to resist/challenge certain part-for-whole relationships.

**Redskins: a tradition of pride, honor, and tribute**

In order to support their ideograph of <tradition> supporters are dependent upon two important synecdochal connections. The first is the appropriation of supportive Native American voices that come to represent other supportive positions in general. In this way the limited supportive Native American voices are used by the larger non-Native supporting group to uphold the tradition of the Redskins mascot. The second move in synecdochal form is dependent upon the relationship between supportive Native American voices and their contribution to the idea of shared values between Natives and the larger demographic of Redskins supporters. Indeed, Native support contributes to the idea and acceptance of shared values between supporters that suggests that fans have legitimacy in their own supportive claims and positions.

I turn now to show how the organization's discourse leans heavily upon the testimony of certain Native American voices that support the Redskins mascot in order to build a synecdochal relationship between fans and Native Americans. In Snyder's October 9, 2013 letter to fans he supplies a quote from the recently retired Chief of the Fredericksburg-area Patawomeck Tribe who said that he would be offended if they did change the name. "Yes there were some awful bad things done to our people over time, but naming the Washington football team the Redskins, we don't consider to be one of those bad things," (2013, p.2) highlighting the tradition that the Redskins name has for some Native Americans. Snyder's second letter does more of the same when quoting Chairwoman Mary L. Resvaloso from the Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians who said, "there are Native Americans everywhere that 100% support the name" (2014, p.1). She is also quoted as saying that "God has turned this [the mascot] around for something good" in focusing on Snyder's Washington Redskins Original Americans Foundation that seeks to address the real challenges in Native American communities.

Of equal importance are Native Americans who are mentioned in the national media as identifying heavily with the inherent pride that the Redskins mascot has for them as a people. One local Native American community member spoke out in response to challenges to change the Redskins mascot of McLoud High School in Oklahoma saying, “Not a single member of our tribal club find the Redskin name offensive. We find the Redskin name... an honor” (Byas, 2015). Continuing along that line of logic, Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma member Mosiah Bluecloud defended keeping the Redskins mascot by relating that “Redskin was not something the colonizer gave to us. We took that name” (Byas, 2015). For Eunice Davidson, Native American from Spirit Lake North Dakota, the Redskins name and images “give Pride to hundreds of thousands of Native American Indians” (Davidson, 2014b). The connection here in synecdochic form is that Redskins represents a particular tradition of pride and honor for some Native Americans. In turn, this relationship as expressed in synecdochal form validates the equally prideful tradition that Redskins represents for non-Native fans and alumni.

The terms which Native Americans themselves use to describe what Redskins represents are embraced by the Washington football team; their decision to base the franchise on those qualities is then cast as a way to honor the unique heritage of Native Americans. The connection reinforces a positive relationship between the team’s name and Native Americans, and it also reinforces a connection between the Redskins, America, and notions of tradition, freedom, pride, honor, and nobility. Overall, supporters of the Redskins mascot use synecdochic form to suggest that the mascot indexes the tradition and pride that fans have for the team and Native Americans, as both entities are asserted to embody the same ideals. Indeed, Redskinsfacts.com asserts that the efforts of thousands of Redskins alumni coupled with millions of supporters ensure that the “team’s spirit and traditions [are kept] alive” (The Facts, n.d.). For those individuals, regardless

of their own ethnic heritage, the name is “one that is prideful, historical, and a great tribute to those who are Native Americans” (Examiner, 2014).

Furthermore, it is the pride and dignity associated with the first Americans that is used in defense of the fact that “the Redskins have always stood for nobility and strength” (Jarrett, 2014). The part to whole relationship in which using the Redskins name represents pride and honor for Native American peoples is simultaneously connected to the pride, courage, honor, class, and respect that individuals express when they hear the name Redskins. According to Native American supporter Eunice Davidson, “the Washington Redskins football team has chosen to honor us and our ancestors” (Davidson, 2014b) by using both Native Americans names and images for their organization, and that those names and images represent a great tribute to those who are Native Americans. Conversely, for non-Native American supporters the name represents how “non-Indians seek to emulate the strength, determination, and spirit associated with ‘braves’ and the like” (Lavoie, 2014).

Once the connection between supportive Native American voices and fans has been made, other supporters may build upon that connection in synecdochal form. In doing so, supporters attempt to legitimize their position of <tradition> by asserting that Native American values and qualities are in fact shared by the entirety of the organization and their fan base. As such, the Redskins mascot represents those shared values and embodies the tradition of the organization. Snyder explicates that the tradition that the Redskins represents that “matters to every other Redskins fan in the D.C. area and across the nation” doesn’t just represent where we came from, but “it’s who we are” (Snyder, 2013, p.1). Snyder moreover acknowledges that the “Washington Redskins” is more than just a name, but a symbol of everything we stand for: strength, courage, pride, and respect. Furthermore, Snyder connects the eight decades of use of

the Redskins name to the same values “we know guide Native Americans and which are embedded throughout their rich history” (2013, p.1). Here, Snyder maintains that the Redskins mascot in synecdochic form affirms the tradition of its use, and also represents principles of respect, honor, and pride that the organization claims to share with Native Americans. Indeed, Snyder ends this letter by stating the Redskins name “continues to hold the memories of where we came from, who we are, and who we want to be” and that as members of “Redskins Nation,” we owe it to fans, coaches, and players both past and present “to preserve that heritage” (2013, p.2).

Snyder elaborates the synecdoche in a second letter penned in March 2014 by reinforcing how the mascot stands for the long history and tradition of honoring these deep and enduring values. While Snyder acknowledges it is not enough to simply celebrate the values and heritage of Native Americans, Snyder’s second letter ends with an acknowledgement that as a team, “we have honored them through our words and on the field” and that the organizations 82 year old tradition of carrying the name, serves as an ongoing reminder “of the heritage and tradition that is the Washington Redskins” (Snyder, 2014, p.4). The synecdochic representation here stresses the integral relationship between the tradition of pride for the team and how that pride is representative of the organization’s relationship with all Native American peoples.

While the Redskins organization argues in synecdochic form that changing the name ‘Redskins’ represents a threat to ending their tradition of showing pride and honor for Native Americans, the public discourse surrounding the controversy ultimately indicates how synecdoche has been used to strengthen and reaffirm the ideograph of tradition. Insofar as this synecdoche is appropriated by other public voices to support the mascot, it reinforces the Redskins’ organization use of the mascot as a representational ideograph that indexes <tradition>

and serves as an organizing principle that unifies supporters' positions. However, the Redskins organization and its supporters also advocate for several other synecdochic relationships to defend their own positions and to challenge the synecdoches of mascot opponents. The next section examines one such attempt to resist the synecdoche of equality by highlighting the degree to which the Redskins have been unfairly targeted by Change the Mascot for their particular mascot.

### **Redskins as a scapegoat issue**

While the most prevalent connection to the Redskins mascot on the side of supporters is that of the tradition that Redskins represents for fans and Native Americans alike, the organization and its fans simultaneously make appeals to the trivial nature of the name dispute. In particular, supporters often view the mascot issue as far less important compared to issues such as the economy, Iraq, and Obamacare, as well as the more specific issues facing Native Americans in particular such as poverty, alcoholism and unemployment prevalent on many reservations. Snyder, for example, comments that “no one wants to talk about that stuff [the real issues facing reservations] because it’s not cocktail chit-chat talk,” (Brady, 2014b) arguing that individuals are more concerned with internet clicks and their own publicity than the real issues affecting Native American populations.

In contrast to synecdochal forms that support the ideograph of tradition, this strategy attempts to challenge some of the underlying assumptions in Change the Mascot’s own synecdochal constructions. The scapegoat position advocated by supporters and the organization itself uses synecdochic form to weaken the equality position of Change the Mascot rather than support and defend their own position of tradition. Claims made by supporters that challenge particular synecdoches rather than advancing their own represent attempts to problematize the



underlying part-for-whole relationships upon which they are based. Whereas Change the Mascot claims that the Redskins controversy represents a larger threat to Native American people and reinforces problematic stereotypes, supporters claim “there are so many more issues that are important for the tribe than to waste time on what a team is called” (McMillan, 2013). Such claims attempt to sever the part-to-whole relationship asserted by mascot critics; they challenge the idea that the mascot is indicative of larger problems facing Native Americans, complicating the discourse surrounding the controversy by focusing on the whole and trying to deflect from the part (the mascot) itself.

In an attempt to refocus the name issue to more “genuine issues,” supporters bring up Dan Snyder’s creation of the Washington Redskins Original Americans Foundation, which was started to provide meaningful and measurable resources that provide real opportunities for tribal communities. In this manner, Snyder casts the issue over the Redskins mascot as a deflection that ignores the more pressing issues facing Indian country. According to Robert Rides at the Door, Blackfeet Tribal member and Redskins fan, “We all agree there are more pressing issues that require political attention” (Rides at the Door, 2014) and that the Redskins continue to honor the heritage of First Nations people by keeping the name. Indeed, for former WWII code talker Peter McDonald, “many of our people still don’t have running water in their homes... This is the greatest country in the world, and while we go to help Third World countries there’s a Third World situation right at our doorstep,” (Vargas and Clarke, 2013) so why should such an effort be made to change a name and not to fix those issues which should not occur inside a nation as great as the United States. Such remarks challenge the extent to which Change the Mascot’s message of equality is based on the Redskins mascot representing a fundamental limitation in

being treated as equals, and imply that the campaign is neglecting the “right” for some Native Americans to have access to clean water and the ability to heat their own homes.

Furthermore, the fact that the Redskins have been singled out by the Change the Mascot campaign is seen by many supporters as unfair when compared to other professional sports teams that still use native imagery like the Blackhawks, Chiefs, and Indians. Such claims represent the attempt by supporters to use synecdochic form to challenge the connection between advocated by Change the Mascot regarding the acceptance of Native American imagery in general but not in the case of the Redskins in particular. Supporters express that the threat of a name change is an attempt to attack the Washington franchise in particular while letting other sporting teams that use Native American imagery off the hook. Former Redskins player Jay Schroeder expressed “If you look around the country, if you want to change the Redskins, you’ve got to change a lot of names. I’m wondering why everybody is going after the Redskins and not everybody else” (Tomasson, 2014). In defense of this position, supporters argue that Native American organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) still employ a Native American headdress logo similar to that of the Redskins, but that the NCAI is not being asked to change its logo whereas the Redskins are. Furthermore, in highlighting the manner in which Native American imagery is widely accepted by the public at large, supporters argue that the American Indian imagery used on the Indian Head penny as well as the buffalo nickel was not met with a similar level of hostility. In this way, supporters argue that the Redskins are being unfairly targeted as a scapegoat for the broader mascot issue; if there really is an issue with the imagery, they suggest it needs to be addressed across the board. The perceived obstacles to achieving this change, particularly at the level of professional sports with multiple teams and leagues needing to agree to mascot changes, suggest a whole-to-part relationship that preserves

the status quo: since change is unlikely to take place in whole, it should not be forced onto a specific part (the Redskins organization).

Another example comes in response to Adidas' announcement that it would offer financial support to any U.S. high school that wants to change its Native American mascot or logo. The Redskins organization fired back at Adidas noting the hypocrisy in offering to assist in name changes at the high school level while continuing to profit off those same Native American images at the professional level. According to Redskins' team spokesman Maury Lane "Adidas make[s] hundreds of millions of dollars selling uniforms to teams like the Chicago Blackhawks and the Golden State Warriors," (Cox, 2015) and they also sponsor former Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III. Again, franchise supporters claim the organization is being unfairly targeted to change their name while other sporting teams that continue to use Native American imagery are ignored. All of these efforts to claim that the Redskins are being scapegoated attempt to undermine the synecdoches of Change the Mascot through competing synecdochic forms, revealing how synecdoche is a useful rhetorical concept for understanding patterns of argument and counter-argument in public controversies and observing the limitations of such part-for-whole relationships.

Although this position has only been adopted by some supporters, op-eds do reveal some voices using the scapegoating synecdoche. One important voice in challenging Change the Mascot's message are those Native American supporters who argue that in comparison to the Redskins name issue "there are so many more issues that are important for the tribe than to waste time on what a team is called" (McMillan, 2013). Non-Native supporters agree with this sentiment insofar as some argue "don't our public servants have something better to do – say, address sequestration, tax and entitlement reform, joblessness, climate change..." (DeLuca,

2013). Others pick up on the unfair targeting of the Redskins organization, as in the statement that “if politicians were truly serious about the issue, they should tackle the entire issue, not just the one in the nation’s capital” (Harper, 2013). For these supporters, if the Redskins name issue is really that big of a problem then the argument remains that the issue should be addressed across the board rather than allowing some teams to continue using their Native American images. According to Redskins alum Jay Schroeder, “if you look around the country, if you want to change the Redskins, you’ve got to change a lot of names. I’m wondering why everybody is going after the Redskins and not everybody else” (ICTMNS, 2014d). Some even employ scapegoating to index broader political arguments, suggesting that the Redskins name change represents an attempt “of leftists who simply want to empower the federal government to impose what they believe under the name of change” (Steinberg, 2014a).

The scapegoating synecdoche is appropriate to some extent, especially given the degree to which some Native Americans themselves argue that “we’re much more concerned about diseases, the drought [or] some of the other things that we would probably encounter” (Boyer, 2014) than with the Redskins controversy. However, the manner in which supporters challenge Change the Mascot’s emphasis on equality reveals a technique that helps supporters maintain the status quo and delegitimize Change the Mascot’s message by attacking the foundational relationship that its message is built upon. Supporters claim that part-for-whole relationship articulated by opponents, in which the Redskins mascot represents inequality, is deceptive when you consider all the issues facing American as a whole and Native Americans in particular. Thus, the testimony in this section reveals how supporters are challenging the part-for-whole relationship from which Change the Mascot’s message of equality is dependent upon by advocating that the Redskins are being scapegoated.

As the controversy develops, two additional synecdoches emerge. While these are less prominent in the public discourse, they may represent an attempt by supporters to shift ideographs from <tradition> towards <liberty> as their position has come under withering attack in the political arena and the public sphere. The final two sections of this chapter examine how supporters have shifted their discourse to represent a different ideographic value from which they can defend their position.

### **Redskins as erasure of Native Americans**

While the scapegoat synecdoche highlights the degree to which criticism of the Redskins name unfairly deflects attention from the widespread use of Native American imagery, other fans claim that the attempt to eliminate the mascot represents the total erasure of Native American images and history from mainstream culture. This part to whole relationship suggests that eliminating the Redskins mascot is akin to the removal of Native American influence from local and national discourse altogether. This synecdoche is less of a direct challenge to Change the Mascot's own synecdochic relationships. Instead, it focuses more on an attempt to elucidate a response to what changing the Redskins mascot means for other Native American images and names. It complicates Change the Mascot's message of equality and also shifts the discourse away from the issue of the mascot itself.

One such example, according to Don Bettelyon in his brief regarding the *Blackhorse v Pro Football* ruling, is that "[the] eradication of the Redskins mark poses serious harm to such individuals' cultural identities and heritage and paternalistically favors the views of mostly non-native administrators over those of Native Americans who identify with the name 'Redskins'" (What Others are Saying, n.d.). Indeed, in defense of the continued use of Native American imagery in modern culture, Bettelyon argues that the attempt to force the Washington franchise

into changing the Redskins name is an attempt to further eradicate of “positive Native American imagery and terminology from mainstream American culture” (What Others are Saying, n.d.). For another, the battle over the words Redskins offers a potential reality for Native Americans in which “I think it’s going to come to a point where political correctness is going to kill our [Native American] history” (Vargas and Clarke, 2013).

Eunice Davidson, a Native American from Spirit Lake, North Dakota, states that the nationwide attempt to remove Native American imagery and terminology identifies the very real threat towards “mak[ing] us a forgotten people” (Davidson, 2014b). Moreover, this erasure is seen as an attempt to remove the sense of pride that Native Americans have for themselves. Some voices believe that the effort will not stop until all names and images are gone. Indeed, Robert Rides at the Door, Blackfeet, mirrors Davidson’s sentiments in arguing that elected officials are now trying to completely eliminate Native American imagery from sports and society. Rides at the Door sees the intent of such a move as a means to “erase Native Americans from history, like we never happened and all what we stood for” (Rides at the door, 2014). Indeed, the part for whole relationship here stresses that an attack on the Redskins is part of an agenda to eliminate all true Native American history. Furthermore, another supporter argues that “erasing the names of great Indian tribes from sports teams and helicopters in the sky might eventually destroy their memory” (The Washington Times, 2014) which for those who support keeping the name would represent an even greater injustice being committed against Native Americans.

For those Native Americans who support the continued use of the Redskins mascot, the debate signals a step towards removing Native Americans entirely from history. Insofar as some Native Americans support keeping the name, other supporters can use that advocacy to

legitimize their own position by suggesting that some Native Americans believe the term is neither derogatory nor inflammatory. While this perspective is certainly among the most extreme stance taken on the side of Redskins supporters it nonetheless represents an attempt to challenge Change the Mascot's message in synecdochic form. Indeed, such a shift in the discourse of supporters not only represents an attempt to rally supporters but also to complicate an understanding of the controversy by suggesting that elimination of the mascot in fact silences Native voices and erases Native history. It is important to note the extent that this position is almost entirely dependent upon the voice of a very small number of Native American supporters.

### **Redskins in defense of Freedom of Speech**

Supporters of the mascot construct another synecdochal relationship when they argue that such a change embodies a threat to freedom of speech. In response to the ruling to remove certain trademarks registrations from the Redskins organization some supporters questioned the "dangerous precedent" (Shapira, 2015b) the government's action has for the core principles of freedom of speech. The synecdoche here stresses that a ruling on the Redskins name may seem like a small matter, but it is representative of a much larger issue. In particular, the fight over the mascot is emblematic of a larger discussion over commercial speech and the extent to which a private enterprise can be forced to change simply because some people "don't like the name of the product" (Wood, 2014). Some see the Redskins name debate as taking political correctness to a whole new level. For 2016 presidential candidate Ben Carson, the name debate represents not a political issue but rather a debate over the "fundamental freedom to express oneself, which is part of the fabric of America" (Carson, 2014).

Insofar as supporters claim that "the Redskins [should] handle what to call their team" (Sherfinski, 2014) and that their right to freedom of speech complements the importance of

tradition, such a move may represent a shift in representational ideographs for supporters towards liberty over tradition given the success of Change the Mascot's message of equality. A necessary component in such a position is the extent to which Native Americans as well as fans, defend the Redskins as simply being a term. Indeed, for Jerry and Gladys Flat Lip, the Washington team name represents just that, a name. Despite the fact Jerry admits he did not really like the Redskins name at first, he maintains that him and his wife are "just two redskins, Native Americans, and we know who we are" (Brady, 2014a). For those Native American supporters, when sporting teams adopt their names and images for their own use, it is simply representative of the degree to which those names bring pride to all Native American peoples. In connection to the previous synecdoches of erasure and tradition, the synecdoche here stresses that changing the names of teams that use Native American terms is simultaneously an attempt to remove the honor that Native Americans have for their own nicknames and logos.

Indeed, some supporters take such a position one step further in defending the use of the Redskins as a reference to what some Native Americans called themselves. For those supporters the name is an integral part of Native American identity and furthermore, that Redskins have become a symbol of survival and determination. Certainly among particular communities the Redskins mascot has been something "they have been brought up with all their life" (KXLY, 2014) both within D.C. and among the team's fan base, as well as among Native American communities that continue to use their own names and logos for their own sporting teams. Again, a connection is being made between the defense of the Redskins mascot and defense of what Native Americans choose to call themselves across the country and in their own communities. In response to the ruling of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to remove protections from a number of Redskins trademarks one supporter argued "what happened to the freedom of speech



and expression guaranteed by the First Amendment?” (Hunter, 2014). Indeed, the Redskins controversy for some is seen as an issue of liberty--- an attempt to silence free speech.

Although the liberty synecdoche has yet to see more than a minimal degree of circulation in the public sphere, such a move may represent an attempt to shift the controversy surrounding the Redskins controversy from being one between <equality> and <tradition> to potentially one between <equality> and <liberty>, in which mascot supporters may find a more defensible position. To the extent that the ideograph of <liberty> may uphold supporters’ positions in the current controversy based on the notion that “without Equality, Liberty cannot exist” and that “Equality in every particular is only possible with the destruction of personal Liberty,” (Condit and Lucaites, 1993, p. 226), such a move could potentially prolong the controversy into a stalemate. Such a position, as advocated by supporters could potentially be deemed successful in regards to the current controversy in that a position of liberty could uphold the status quo and with it supporters continued use of the Redskins mascot.

### **Summary**

While the discourse of supporters focuses on defending and supporting their ideograph of <tradition> it simultaneously involves challenges to the messages of Change the Mascot’s ideograph of <equality> and the underlying synecdoches which support such a position. While some supporters have chosen to defend the continued use of Redskins by adopting the synecdoche of tradition and honor, other supporters have chosen challenge oppositional synecdoches in an attempt to complicate such representations and maintain the controversy by shifting the discourse to address such problematic relationships. As the controversy continues and a resolution is denied, supporters remain successful in upholding the status quo. Until such

time as the Redskins are forced to change their mascot, continuing to discuss the controversy rather than seeking pragmatic attempts to resolve it favors the position of supporters.

### Chapter Four: Conclusion

While the debate over the Redskins mascot focuses on the fundamental issues of <equality> for Change the Mascot and <tradition> for the Washington Redskins organization, their competing discourses do not involve “truly representative” cases, but rather ones that are shaped by their competing interests in the debate. According to Burke (1969), any act of representation automatically implies a synecdochic relationship and any synecdochic relationship implies reduction. As such, problems arise with the synecdochal constructions employed by Change the Mascot and the Washington Redskins organization since they are not “truly representative” of the whole. That is, the Redskins mascot may not indicate the manner in which Native Americans are denied their rights to equality nor how the mascot functions as a “badge of honor” for Native American peoples either. Even if we agree that both <equality> and <tradition> are fundamental social values, their use as organizing principles for the mascot controversy are based in part on a reduction of those terms which in turn complicates the controversy over the mascot itself. Indeed, the divergent positions that advocate for either equality or tradition only represent a piece of the larger battle for equality for Native Americans. While such positions are effective in organizing the debate they are nonetheless complicated by the degree to which the Redskins controversy itself is only part of the struggle towards mutual respect and the equal treatment of Native Americans.

According to Moore (1993), an analysis of the synecdochal and ideographic relationships reveals how the former can serve as an important tactic to make the latter more concrete for groups, but in doing so, “it distorts the conflict because it only *represents* the conflict” (p.270, emphasis original). Insofar as each group has produced its own synecdoches for what the Redskins mascot represents based on their respective underlying values of equality and tradition,

both synecdoches are problematic in that they transform the debate over whether to change the mascot into a dispute over what the mascot represents. With their divergent representations of the Redskins mascot, Change the Mascot and the Washington Redskins organization are able to support and defend their respective positions, but nonetheless sustain the controversy by shifting the debate over the mascot itself to one over those divergent synecdochic representations.

In an attempt to answer research questions 1) what synecdoches are evident in recent public controversy over the Redskins mascot? and 2) how do these synecdoches construct the meaning of the Redskins mascot for competing sides in the controversy, I have argued that there are several synecdoches at work in the most recent public controversy over the Redskins mascot. These include but are not limited to the most well supported synecdoches which establish the relationship between the Redskins mascot as both a symbol of how Native Americans are denied mutual respect and equal rights as well as how the mascot functions as a representation of the tradition and honor that supporter's claim it has always been emblematic of. Indeed, these synecdoches which directly support the larger ideographic positions of <equality> and <tradition> are supported by multiple lesser synecdoches. In particular, chapter two revealed how Change the Mascot used synecdoches that connect the Redskins mascot to inequality, to not being treated as Americans, as the face of our nation's capital, and as a symbol for the NFL globally. In turn, Chapter three revealed some of the lesser synecdoches at use by the Redskins organization and its supporters such the mascot being a source of pride and honor, as well as the scapegoat position which challenges opposing synecdoches by using synecdochal form as a tool for undermining the synecdochal connections of Change the Mascot's message. Additionally, supporters have also established new synecdochal connections for defending the Redskins

mascot which advocate for the Redskins as representative of a freedom of speech issue and any individual's liberty to continue using the name.

This concluding chapter provides answers to research question 3) how do the competing constructions of the Redskin reflect the underlying values of each side and what does it tell us about the respective social truths being advocated by each side? and 4) to what extent do the representations of the Redskin mascot enable or inhibit productive resolutions to the controversy? In short, through divergent synecdoches the debate becomes polarized around an either/or perspective rather than about both equality and the tradition of honor that the Redskins mascot has become representative of. Furthermore, this either/or perspective causes a reduction in the controversy: either changing the Redskins mascot represents that Native Americans are being treated with equality and mutual respect, or it represents a threat to the continued legacy and tradition of honoring Native Americans. Unfortunately, the issue surrounding Native American names and images as mascots is not an either/or dilemma, but a both/and situation. Native Americans should be treated both with equality and with honor. As such, the use of divergent synecdoches which establish the respective ideographic positions of equality and tradition are responsible for how the controversy has become polarized and intractable.

The dispute over the Redskins mascot has become complicated and prolonged by the use of such organizing principles, and in turn it is complicated to answer to whether the mascot representations will enable a productive resolution to the controversy. As long as controversy is maintained by challenging the position of Change the Mascot, or transformed by attempts to shift the discourse surrounding the Redskins controversy to include potential scapegoating and challenges against freedom of speech, the status quo will be upheld. Such a position favors supporters in that the Redskins mascot is already well established. Yet over the long run,

maintaining the dispute may in fact favor Native Americans and mascot. Indeed, the increased longevity of the dispute may benefit Native Americans in that it provides a longer timeframe from which to educate the public about the detrimental issues facing Natives with regard to the use and abuse of Native American images and names.

In the remainder of this chapter I examine how both ideographs and synecdoche function in shaping the respective positions of the debate. In particular, I show how particular synecdoches and their representational ideographs intersect and interact in ways that shift the focus of the debate. Additionally, I argue how those competing representations of the Redskins mascot inhibit or provide opportunities for resolution. I also present the implications of my findings both in terms of using ideographs and synecdoche as important tools for future analysis as well as the implications this study has on the discourse surrounding Native American mascot controversies in general and how to make sense of some of those arguments. In particular, the concepts of synecdoche and ideograph help explain how different sides in mascot controversies generate public support, while also showing how those controversies can become polarizing and intractable.

Ultimately, the ideograph of <equality> dominates the controversy and serves as an organizing principle for both sides in ways that maintains the controversy. Indeed, given the particular context from which issues of Native American mascot use usually develop, <equality> serves as a means by which opponents can challenge their continued use, but also serves as a means by which supporters can challenge the numerous Native American mascots not currently under inquiry. As a result, <equality> as organizing principle in this particular controversy offers a unique opportunity from which to examine how the Redskins controversy is different from other such controversies which employ ideographs. Particularly, while opponents use <equality>

to advocate for change, supporters can use <equality> ironically to question its application in this context.

In contrast to other controversies, maintaining the controversy offers potential *benefits* for mascot opponents in this particular instance. While an intractable conflict often results in neither position being able to produce a resolution in which both parties are satisfied, there exists some potential to create more meaningful change. Maintaining the controversy provides more opportunities for the education and engagement by the public. Of particular importance in the Redskins controversy is the potential for productive educational opportunities. Such opportunities to better educate the public at large about inequalities facing Native Americans can multiply as long as the controversy is maintained in the public sphere.

### **Implications for Ideographs**

According to Moore (1993), when one representational ideograph produces competing synecdoches with different underlying value orientations, such as equality and tradition, the resulting discourse created by these relationships prevents conflict resolution. Furthermore, Moore (1993) maintains that even when an opportunity for “resolution” can be obtained, the problem that one ideograph creates in producing divergent synecdoches ensures that the problem remains. Indeed, both divergent synecdoches in the Redskins controversy are built in part upon the relationship between the Redskins mascot in particular and Native American peoples in general. Since the mascot functions as a different symbol for each group---for critics, the degree of inequality Native Americans experience, and for supporters, the long standing tradition of honor and pride---the controversy addresses only the symbol itself rather than the underlying values that it represents, and it deflects attention from the lived realities of Native American peoples who experience racism at the cost of such mascots. Even if the Redskins mascot were to

be changed, the larger debate over the widespread use of Native American images and names in general would continue. In this way, the rhetoric of competing synecdoches which support the respective divergent ideographs of supporters and critics are responsible in part for further propagation of the controversy over Native mascots.

Even if the next few years see increasing pressure put on the Washington Redskins to change their mascot, the larger issue regarding the use of Native American images and names will continue to be a problem. Indeed, even so far as the Redskins controversy is representative of the larger discourse surrounding the use and abuse of Native American names and images, Change the Mascot's discourse of equality is simultaneously indicative of an equally important discourse surrounding additional issues of equality and mutual respect for Native Americans. As such, the reduction of equality and tradition in this particular instance of the Redskins controversy is limiting for both larger discourses. Specifically, insofar as Change the Mascot argues that the Redskins mascot represents the inequality that Native Americans experience, it obstructs an understanding of other more complicated mascot issues including those institutions that have received approval of their Native American mascots. Furthermore, Change the Mascot's message of equality and the underlying synecdoche which establishes the Redskins mascot as a symbol of that inequality limits the extent to which a discourse surrounding other instances of equality can be expressed and understood given the argument for changing the Redskins mascot.

As a result, any kind of victory over the Redskins, including the most recent 2014 Blackhorse ruling, remains mostly symbolic insofar as supporters will continue to claim and defend that the Redskins is in fact a symbol of tradition. However, it appears that at least in this particular instance the ideograph of <equality> may be able to "trump" that of <tradition>.



Insofar as the discourse surrounding the Redskins controversy is focused on one particular instance of Native American mascot use, the potential importance that changing the Redskins mascot has within the larger discourse cannot be downplayed. Indeed, because of the notoriety of the Washington Redskins and the prominence of this controversy in both national and international media, any forced change to the Washington mascot could represent a tipping point, whereby other institutions see their own use of Native American mascots as outdated and indefensible.

While the problem remains insofar as any potential resolution is exclusive to this particular instance, it does not mean fans will stop defending the Redskins and other Native American mascots by invoking <tradition>. Tradition will continue to be used as an organizing principle for supporters of other Native American mascots as long as that position is still successful in obstructing resolution. Indeed, the Washington Redskins organization maintains that they will win out in the end and that they will never change the name. In response to Change the Mascot's message, mascot supporters have shifted their discourse to challenge Change the Mascot's ideograph of <equality>. As witnessed by the shift in supporters messages towards challenging Change the Mascot's synecdoches as opposed to supporting their own, it appears that change is afoot in the number of individuals who are responding favorably to Change the Mascot's message of equality. Although supporters have begun to challenge Change the Mascot's message of equality in an attempt to weaken it as an organizing principle for opponents, challenging that position requires supporters to nonetheless reinforce the equality ideograph by responding to it.

A clear example of this is found in supporters' discourse surrounding the potential scapegoating of the Redskins mascot. While the scapegoat position has potential insofar as

supporters can reveal the manner in which the Redskins have been unfairly targeted by Change the Mascot, such a position is also limited in that it fails to challenge the belief that Redskins is in fact a derogatory term. In fact, part of the discourse surrounding the scapegoating of the Redskins is based in the idea that while the Redskins may in fact be racist, it is not the most racist term when compared to a host of others. While such a position is explored in more detail in chapter three, of importance for ideographs is how challenging that message of equality is dependent upon arguing, not that the Redskins is not in fact racist, but that there are other equally derogatory and racist terms out there which should receive *equal treatment* by organizations such as Change the Mascot.

By analyzing the discourse in response to Change the Mascot's message of equality, it is possible to observe how divergent synecdoches prolong the controversy by creating additional discourse surrounding it. In particular, as mentioned in chapter three, some supporters have chosen to address how Change the Mascot's message of equality challenges their own right to freedom of speech and furthermore, how the controversy over the mascot represents a decision by opponents to make a scapegoat of the Redskins in particular. In choosing to highlight how Change the Mascot's message makes a scapegoat out of the Redskins mascot, supporters of keeping the mascot attempt to prolong the controversy by shifting the discourse of Change the Mascot to address why other mascots are not also being challenge by them. For those supporters, as long as other teams are allowed to keep their racial mascots, such as the Braves, Chiefs, and Blackhawks for example, any attempt to force a change of the Redskins mascot represents an unfair attack on the Washington franchise. Such a move, a classic red herring fallacy, represents an attempt to prevent resolution of the controversy.

Such a challenge demands that opponents address the controversy on a larger scale, based in part on the synecdoche established by Change the Mascot in which the Redskins mascot in particular represents the inequality experienced by Native American peoples in general. Such a move is successful in maintaining the controversy as it forces Change the Mascot to address the extent to which their synecdoche is not “truly representative” of either the discourse surrounding the use of Native American mascots in general, or the extent to which Native Americans are denied equal treatment as people. Moreover this move serves to highlight not only that Change the Mascot’s synecdoche is not truly representative but also that it reduces the conflict over Native American equality to that of changing the Redskins mascot. In arguing that the controversy represents only a slice of the larger issue and furthermore, a scapegoating attempt by Change the Mascot, supporters are able to challenge their message of equality by revealing the manner in which opponents’ ideograph of equality only *represents* one piece of the conflict over Native American equality.

When coupled with other claims made in chapter three regarding the right to freedom of speech, I believe supporters are attempting to create a third representational ideograph for the Redskins mascot that focuses on defending individual liberty. Indeed, such a move may very well represent an understanding that their previous representation of tradition was losing ground to the message of equality offered by opponents. This attempt to create another connection for the Redskins symbol creates a false dilemma in which equality and liberty face off against one another. Such a dilemma prevents a discussion of the larger problem of Native American inequality and other mascot controversies, and negates attempts at conflict resolution.

As long as the Redskins mascot is constituted as a symbol of the inequality Native Americans encounter for opponents and as a marker of tradition for supporters, it will also

reinforce the ideograph of equality for the former and tradition/liberty for the latter. This complicated relationship fuels controversy and highlights political incompatibility insofar as positions are polarized to represent an either/or discourse. Even if the controversy is resolved by changing the mascot, individuals will still defend their right to liberty and the importance of tradition. Tradition will continued to be used to defend other calls towards equality for Native Americans. However, in my analysis of the Redskins controversy, even with the prolonged discourse surrounding the controversy, it appears that calls for equality are overwhelming those made towards maintaining traditions. Indeed, as discussed earlier while calls for continuing tradition are often made in response to challenges regarding mutual respect and equal treatment of individuals it appears that my analysis reveals an instance in which the ideograph of <tradition> has faltered and as a result new lines of debate are being explored and challenge by supporters in an attempt to maintain the status quo as long as possible.

### **Implications for Synecdoche**

The Redskins controversy also illustrates how synecdoches and ideographs contribute to polarization in conflict. The continued attention to the disputed part of each side's respective synecdoches and the linkage of these synecdoches to powerful competing ideographs inhibits advocates from addressing both Native American mascot use and the inequality experienced by Native American peoples. Furthermore, the discourse surrounding either Native American mascot use at large or the lack of equality and mutual respect that Native Americans experience are ignored insofar as they are limited by the discourse surrounding the Redskins controversy. In using equality as a representation for the debate and an organizing principle for opponents, the controversy is also about the equal voice of Native Americans as much as the equal treatment of them. Indeed, many Native American controversies are limited insofar as they become about the

Native American voice challenging the Euro-American appropriation of the Native American voice. The Native voice is ultimately both enabled and constrained by the discourse surrounding the Redskins controversy. Their voice is enabled in that multiple Native positions are communicated through the discourse of both supporters and opponents. However, Native voice is also limited by the extent to which those supportive positions have been co-opted by non-Native supporters in order to obstruct the multiplicity of Native American positions which would otherwise reveal yet another example of the unequal treatment of Native Americans' voices.

As evidenced in chapter two, Change the Mascot employs and advocates for particular synecdoches that support the relationship between the Redskins mascot and the notion of equality. In turn, chapter three shows how the Redskins organization and its supporters deploy their own synecdoches in defense of their connection to the tradition that the Redskins mascot represents. Insofar as Change the Mascot's message of equality was created in response to the long standing use of the Redskins mascot and the tradition that Native American images and names have throughout America, Redskins supporters not only defend their connection to tradition but also challenge the synecdoches which support Change the Mascot's message of equality. In these instances, synecdoche exists also a tool by which rhetors may raise challenges to ultimately weaken the validity of particular representations.

As evidenced by the Redskins controversy, mascot supporters do not simply offer new synecdoches to replace existing ones. They also attempt to deconstruct the underlying part to whole relationship that these synecdoches represent. For example, in claiming that Change the Mascot is making a scapegoat of the Redskins mascot, supporters are actually challenging the extent to which Change the Mascot's synecdoches are representative of mascot issues in general and the impact that the Redskins mascot has on equal rights for all Native American peoples.

Insofar as Change the Mascot maintains that the controversy over changing the Redskins mascot represents a challenge against the use of Native American names and images at large, supporters claim that such a connection is not truly representative of mascot controversies. As such, supporters maintain that if the Redskins mascot controversy is to be representative of the larger discourse surrounding challenging Native American mascots in general, then Change the Mascot's message should reflect challenging all mascots rather than unfairly targeting one mascot in particular. In these ways, the mascot controversy shows how synecdoche is particularly vulnerable to contestation as advocates can either point to other parts of the whole that are being ignored, or direct attention to the whole in order to deflect attention from the "part" in question. The Redskins controversy shows that even when these synecdochal representations are challenged, the underlying ideograph may be reinforced.

While supporters attempt to delegitimize Change the Mascot's message of equality through scapegoating, they attempt to challenge other synecdochal relationships by drawing attention to how Change the Mascot's message challenges the right to freedom of speech. This rhetorical strategy also functions as a type of synecdoche. Whereas Change the Mascot's message is based on the notion that the Redskins controversy represents a threat to all Native Americans, supporters again challenge this relationship in two ways. The first is by using Native American testimony that highlights individuals who have accepted the Redskins as part of their own identity, and the other is in claiming that Redskins is just a name for a football team. Both moves are explored at length in chapter three; the important take away is that these challenges represent attempts to shift the discourse surrounding the controversy in order to maintain controversy and prolong any attempt at resolution.

The first move challenges the synecdochal relationship being advocated by Change the Mascot by showing how some Native Americans embrace the term and mascot, thereby disrupting the notion that Redskins is a derogatory term for all Native Americans. Such testimony interrupts the relationship that Change the Mascot attempts to establish between the Redskins mascot and the racism that it represents towards all Native Americans. Indeed, supporters challenge the claim made by Change the Mascot that Redskins is the most derogatory term you could call a Native American by showing how some Natives embrace the term. This claim goes hand in hand with supporters' defense of freedom of speech in highlighting how if the term is truly derogatory as Change the Mascot claims, you would not see Natives using the term themselves. Furthermore, as evidenced in chapter three the transformative shift from tradition to liberty represents an attempt by supporters to invoke the eternal struggle between liberty and equality in order to frame the controversy as intractable.

Ultimately, both of these moves by supporters attempt to maintain controversy by showing how the messages of Change the Mascot are problematic, vague, and not truly representative of the relationships they are attempting to establish through synecdoche. Indeed, the discourse in chapter three reveals how the construction of part-to-whole relationships is integral in supporting a particular ideograph and how challenges to those synecdochic relationships attempt to weaken the rhetorical power of the ideograph. Due in part to the fact that the Redskins mascot is already established and it is Change the Mascot's responsibility to challenge the tradition that the mascot represents for supporters, the move to complicate the oversimplified ideograph supporters' advocate for is successful in maintaining the controversy. While such a move may potentially be seen as nothing more than an attempt to stall the

inevitable change that is coming, prolonging the controversy can be seen as a victory for supporters.

While the success of Change the Mascot's message of equality potentially represents a shift in public attitude, supporters have been able to complicate the controversy and block change by challenging the representation and reduction inherent in Change the Mascot's ideograph of equality. This section reveals both the manner in which synecdoches can be used in support of particular ideographs as well as how synecdoche can be used as a tool for revealing how challenges to particular synecdochal relationships maintain controversy by distorting those relationships. Within the Redskins controversy, any attempt at challenging the synecdoches at work from either respective position ultimately distorts the conflict insofar as it limits the extent to which the mascot controversy is representative of mascot controversy in general and larger attempts made to deny Native Americans of mutual respect and equal treatment. Because reduction is inherent in synecdochal relationships, the effectiveness of synecdoche in advocating for a particular position in any controversy is limited by the extent to which such relationships fail to fully represent the range of issues that might be articulated to the core ideographs that organize the different positions in controversy. Insofar as synecdoche can be used by groups to defend and advocate for their respective positions in any controversy, synecdoche can also be used as a critical tool to examine how particular challenges made against a position are based on challenging the part-to-whole relationships that synecdoche represents.

### **Implications for Mascot Scholarship**

The rhetorical significance of this project on efforts to resolve or maintain the controversy over the Redskins mascot lies within the fact that such efforts mirror the very same dilemmas facing other groups in conflict. Indeed, insofar as Change the Mascot advocates for



equality and the Washington Redskins organization defends the tradition of its mascot the discourse surrounding these positions increases polarization and reinforces the incompatibility between groups. An increase in the polarization between groups and the postponement of any kind of resolution serves as a certain kind of success for supporters of the status quo, confirming Moore's argument that competing synecdoches and representational ideographs can be successful in maintaining controversy and generating irreconcilable conflict.

However, within the realm of mascot controversies, I would argue that maintaining the controversy and promoting the discussion of mascot issues in the media represents a different kind of success. Specifically, as long as the media continues to cover such issues, the discourse surrounding mascot controversies has been successful in part because it helps to educate the media and the public at large. Indeed, in chapter three I examined how supporters claimed that the Redskins controversy is a scapegoat for a whole host of other problems. While such a position was adopted by supporters in order to challenge the message of Change the Mascot, it nonetheless is responsible for some education about the plethora of other issues facing Native American peoples. Furthermore, Change the Mascot's own synecdoches are responsible in part for educating the public about the "tradition" of the Redskins football team including its own segregationist history before they adopted the Redskins name and image.

Furthermore, while no current plan for resolution exists regarding the Redskins mascot it does appear that mascot issues in general are receiving more attention, the likes of which have not been seen since the late 1990s. Indeed, insofar as the Washington Redskins view maintaining the controversy as a success for their position, keeping the controversy within the focus of the public represents an altogether different type of success for Change the Mascot. While the Washington Redskins and its supporters will continue to challenge the messages of Change the

Mascot, as long as the debate occurs within the public sphere there exists the potential opportunity for individuals to become more knowledgeable and aware of such messages that are being produced in opposition to the continued use of Native American images and names as mascots.

Rosenstein (2001) argued that the World Series and Super Bowl protests of 1991 and 1992 along with the airing of *In Whose Honor?* in 1997 were responsible for much of the national media becoming educated about Native mascots. I argue that in the Redskins controversy, synecdoche and representational ideographs are the rhetorical means by which mascot controversies receive an increased focus within the national media. As long as the issue remains at a level of prominence in the media, more and more individuals have the potential to become more educated on the subject and voice their own support or opposition for mascots, locally or nationally. Indeed, within the last few years we have already seen California banning the Redskins mascot statewide, with similar attempts at banning derogatory and racialized sporting mascots by other states such as Washington, Colorado, Oregon, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Tennessee (see Chapter one for citations). The extent to which such positions are now becoming more prominent in mainstream media suggests that keeping a discussion of such controversies in the media may in part be responsible for an increase in public opposition to mascots.

Insofar as the use of Native American names and images are most prevalent in the commodified world of American capitalism, mascot controversies represent a potential access point from which to both to educate and challenge individuals on their continued use. Indeed, Miller, Tovaes, and Black were previously able to reveal the “hegemonic, mythic, and performative aspects” (Endres. 2015, p.653) of Native American mascot use including the

problematic resultants of each practice. More recently, Endres been able to contribute to efforts at educating the public regarding Native American mascot use, particularly the manner in which the use of the University of Utah's Ute mascot reveals "multiple double-binds that emerge from American Indian permission" (2015, p.674) to use Native mascots and imagery. Indeed, as part of that growing body of literature surrounding the use of Native American mascots, this project has revealed how such controversies provide continuing opportunities to educate the public about other issues facing Native America. Until such time as the continued use of Native American mascots by supporting teams end, such controversies will continue to garner public attention for Native American issues insofar as sports remain a particularly important facet of American culture. The controversies surrounding mascot use will continue to be used as particular poignant opportunities from which to bring non-Native individuals up to speed on the issues facing Indian Country.

### **Final Thoughts**

Ultimately, this project represents an attempt to expand upon previous understandings regarding both synecdoche and representational ideographs as tools from which to better understand how particular discourses support and maintain controversy. Indeed the Redskins mascot functions as both a symbol of equality for Change the Mascot and of tradition for the Washington Redskins organization which maintains the social conflict over what the mascot represents and limits opportunities for resolution. At the same time however, this project sought to examine how in denying an opportunity for resolution, particular controversies such as the one over the Redskins mascot may have a public benefit to the extent that they raise awareness of a broad range of issues affecting Native Americans---not the least of which is the continued use of arguably racist words and images.

While these issues continue to be the focus of both national and international discourse, the time is ripe for scholars to elaborate and expand upon the previous research which examine mascot issues. In particular, while the current literature focuses on collegiate and some professional instances of mascot controversies occurring there is a lack of discourse surrounding the more complicated facets of mascot controversies. For example, little current scholarship has examined those colleges and universities that experience continued rights to use Native American images and names for their mascots due to the approval of the tribes they represent. Moreover, the discourse surrounding sporting teams who embrace Native American mascots because the majority of the population who attend those schools are Native American, as evidenced by many high schools that exist on reservations, have also been neglected. While the focus surrounding mascot controversies both in general and specific instances continues to have relevance in both the public and political sphere, scholars from a variety of disciplines including Communication Studies can take advantage of the current level of public attention by examining more of these specific and highly contextual occurrences.

While this project highlights how synecdoche and representational ideographs are beneficial tools with which to approach the Redskins controversy, it is important to understand that such a perspective is not representative of all mascot controversies. Indeed, the perspectives shared in this project, while representative of certain positions surrounding the Redskins controversy may not be reflective of the larger controversy regarding mascots. This includes but is not limited to Native American mascots that have received the approval of tribes, or the use of mascots by institutions based on tribal reservations. Although some claims made by supporters and opponents in this project may in fact mirror the testimony of other related mascot controversies, scholars need to be aware of the problematic bind created in any rhetoric which

categorizes all Native Americans as part of a pan-Native American nation. Future research should examine not only the multiple voices from within Native American positions, but also the manner in which non-Native supporters have been able to appropriate the supportive Native voice in defense of continuing the tradition of mascots.

However, insofar as it appears that the discourse surrounding mascot controversies appears to be tipping towards the position of opponents, scholars need to be aware of what that potential resolution may mean for the concepts and theories discussed herein. The potential that certain representational ideographs have for “tipping the scales” should be noted. In addition, when controversies are not yet clearly understood by the public, there remains a potential opportunity to educate the public while the controversy itself is maintained. An understanding of how such rhetorical devices like synecdoche and representational ideographs function can enable mascot opponents to effectively challenge not only the continued use of racist mascots, but also how such devices can limit the ability of Native Americans to define their own identities and challenge the continued manner in which mascots often stand synecdochically for all Native American peoples.

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