Abstract: In 2002 the Native American House was finally granted space and allotted resources to begin forming Native student services and programming, and outlined plans for the development of American Indian studies began to solidify. And in 2007 the Board of Trustees passed a resolution which proclaimed an end to the use of ‘chief illiniwek’ as the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign mascot. It is against the backdrop of this history that pilot research was carried out to determine, in part, to what degree students on the UIUC campus are familiar with the educational mission of American Indian studies.

The pilot research conducted through interviews of individual students who are connected to the Nevada street neighborhood, which is the current location of the American Indian studies unit, demonstrates the overall lack of knowledge about the American Indian studies program at UIUC. Both students who worked in outreach positions to cultural houses on Nevada street and students who were interviewed in spaces on that street were unfamiliar with the academic unit even though most had some familiarity with the cultural Native American House. Impressions of the Native American House suggested that there was a tendency for students to collapse all of the various Nevada street houses into one category as “cultural” houses, which levels their differences.

Initial Exercises: Assignment #1 Reading Response Tenoso Raising Issues: Methods, Ethics, Race, and Gender are the proposed foci of this first week’s readings. However, a predominant theme in all of the pieces presented is the concern with the role of the researcher as an interior architect of ethnographic fieldwork. And while each of the readings, in turn, discusses one or more of the issues above, the premise of their treatments pivots primarily around the perspective of the investigator. These pieces are useful meditations for those considering or encountering potential
problems in both the field and analytical work of ethnography. Yet, extended attention to the station of the researcher may occlude a critical engagement of the practical efficacy of an ethnographer’s products in the eyes of the communities and collaborators involved. Put another way, raising issues in/of ethnography should be a means for explaining and exploring gaps in analyses, but raising issues should not become a method for distracting from or excusing work which does not represent the interests of all agents concerned. For example, Stacey’s piece on the ethical aspects of dilemmas in close, ethnographic relationships is primarily focused on the personal effects to the researcher. We hear of her choice of research method and subsequent disappointments and uncomfortable moments as an individual struggle with an imagined applicability and utility of her before-field ideals of ethnography. Indeed, Stacey admits that much of her rationale behind her chosen approach is founded in a desire to be closer and perhaps thus more authentically approximate to the communities she studies. Yet, her experiences with informant instability and inter-personal entanglements I would argue have more to do with her preconceived regard of both critical and feminist ethnography than their seemingly incompatible synthesis through practice. Stacey herself concedes this possibility, saying “Indeed, as Carole Joffe has suggested to me, my assault on the ethical foundations of fieldwork may have been unduly harsh—a fairer measure, perhaps, of my prior illusions about ethnographic virtue than of ethnographic vice,” (117). Twine’s “Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies” likewise illustrate the subjective (and sometimes subjugating) positionality of race with regard to the researcher. In her discussion on the complicating fields, methods, and national contexts of race, Twine aims to develop a dialogue about the limitations and implications of this elusive social category. Carefully and skillfully she traces the contours of current racialized research practices and experiences in an effort to turn researchers onto the problematic assumptions and polemic boundaries of presumed racial insider/outsider functionality. And, while she accounts for the differences in race discourse and practice amongst various communities, she still avoids positing a practical foundation for interpreting race relations as they are encountered in the field. Rather, Twine’s contribution has as its primary concern the beginnings of a discussion which benefits those who experience (or claim not to experience) race as a matter of academic inquiry. Duneier’s chapters, in contrast the aforementioned pieces, contain salient examples of the potential praxis of reflexive research which invokes both community and researcher positions in an
ethnographic project. Outlining his personal position vis a vis the sidewalk community he writes of, Duneier explains his methods and motives as markers of accountability to that community. His work reimagines the possible fields of research and shared authority in his model of collaborative labors: bringing sidewalk intellectuals into the academic institution as a reciprocal engagement of community experience and knowledge. Equally significant, the political act of sharing monetary and textual co-validation with his research participants is a radical departure from the concerns of ethics and issues raised by previously discussed researchers. It would have been very informative, I believe, to have read the afterword by Duneier’s key informant in this section. Finally, the AAA Ethics Code on the anthropologist’s responsibility in research returns to the investigator’s role as a conscientious and reflexive principal agent. Disappointingly, the focus on researcher, again, leaves out a critical engagement of questions, designs, and methods in anthropological work which may shift and de-center the weighty emphasis on anthropologist as essential research position. Which is not to say that thoughtful consideration of professional/research stances are not important, but that the arrangement of ethical and experiential questions and problem around these positions alone may be diverting attention from other ethnographic, community-based concerns and approaches of the groups we work amongst.

**Initial Exercises:** I chose a downtown, local bar and pool-playing establishment as my field site. I went to the bar at an evening time when there were likely to be people. However, I was careful to go during a week-day as it would not be too full and busy to observe the patrons. I worked from the interior of the business and limited my observations from my vantage-point in a corner. Because this particular bar serves an edible pizza and to form a sort of cover for my presence and activity there, I invited another person to join me for dinner there. Inside the bar was dimly lit with neon and a few colored spot lights. The air was smoke-free, which until recently was unusual for bars in the area. The temperature was intensely cold. The volume of the patrons and background music was initially low in general. There were about six tables in my general area, served by one female waitperson. The whole of the bar was predominantly occupied by men, all of the women present were in couples with men, but there were quite a few groupings of all-male companies, particularly around the pool tables. Directly in front of me was a group of three young men, behind them a table with a heterosexual couple; later occupied by four young men. To one side of me was a female professor and a man, behind them a heterosexual couple. Outside to the side of
me was a table with two men and one woman, all young. A regular street-figure, a woman, briefly stopped passers-by for “two dollars”, sat at a table and after a short time moved on. The woman street-figure has been a regular fixture of the downtown bar scene for some time now. She frequents the outsides of businesses (mostly bars) asking for “two dollars”. On this evening she was first ignored by my companion as he entered the bar (he was talking on his cell phone) and then politely denied money (which he truly did not carry with him) on his way out. She asked one other young man for money and he walked past her without speaking to or looking at her. The behavior of the waitress was a very curious matter. She had a pattern for smiling, talking, and laughing with an older (mid-fifties) couple she waited on. However, in all of her interactions with the tables of young men she neglected to smile, and often moved to take their empty glasses and plates and food orders without the chatty and smiling demeanor she displayed to the older couple. She did not habitually check on the satisfaction of her patrons as is customary with most waitstaff in the service industry. Perhaps she did not ‘expect’ great tips from younger people. Yet, oddest of all, although she was in a position which generally requires close observance of people, she did not seem to notice at all that I was taking copious notes of the situation around me. The lights grew dimmer, the music and general sounds of conversation around me grew louder as the hour passed by. Most of the people in the bar were drinking alcoholic beverages (this was one tenet of participant-observation from which I abstained). Conversation, pool, and drinking were the predominant activities of people in the bar, in that order. The interior of the bar was occupied by a majority of white persons. There was only one ‘inter-racial’ grouping of older people in my view, they were seated at the bar. Later a couple of young men sat near me, one of which was a person of color. The professor and her companion were the only heterosexual couple of color in the bar. All of the remaining whites were grouped with other whites. Outside the bar, on my way out, I noticed a table of colleagues, three women and one man, two of the women were people of color. It is interesting to note that the groupings of people of color were mainly those persons which I know to be associated with the University. That the bar itself is constituted (racially) as a predominantly white space is not surprising, due to its off-campus location and the night of the week. Students and faculty are most likely to be out at the bars during the weekends, anyway. Perhaps the overtly male presence has something to do with the activity of pool on a weeknight. Weekends when I have gone to this particular bar there are younger people of both genders
engaged in pool, generally speaking. The gender, race, relative age, and class of the patrons in the bar on this night must be influenced by the day of the week; as young people of color from two sexes in various pairings and groupings are not uncommon in this bar during weekends. And most, I suspect, come from the University community. During the weeknights, it would seem, this bar is a white, male-dominated, heterosexual space of townspeople. I would be interested in exploring this hypothesis in further observations.

**Initial Exercises:** I chose to examine the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s anthropology department website pages for the project of textual analysis. I paid particular attention to the ways in which the department and its faculty (socio-cultural especially) were represented in conjunction with the work of anthropology. Patterns around the key concepts of research and professional credentials/works undergird much of the presentation of the faculty pages. As a web-based text links between pages are formed to compliment answers to presumed questions: who are the faculty, what do they teach, and how do I become a student in the department? The predominant theme of the site is to provide as much information as possible to potential students. The different subdisciplines and individual faculty have pages devoted to specific sets of narrative and professional work. Other categories of information with secondary importance or external significance are presented as flat data without the contextual or introductory attention given to subdiscipline and faculty pages: courses, students, news, FAQs for example. As a website with both textual and visual possibilities for the communication of ideas, the anthropology website at UIUC is not constructed in a way that maximizes the potential for attracting attention through this internet medium. On the whole, rather, the styles of written and graphic forms of expression are not consistently produced and applied. For example, the anthropology page is a good example of integrating messages about the subdiscipline, our particular program, and the faculty research focus along with interesting and complimentary visual pieces. Whereas, the socio-cultural and linguistic components are text-laden with subdisciplinary themes, incompletely integrating faculty interests along those themes; leaving the work of connecting faculty with ‘thematic clusters’ to the viewer who must go page by page to uncover the associations. Largely underrepresented in all of the subdiscipline and faculty pages are personal representations of the people in our department. The biological anthropology page’s answer to this is the use of individual pictures to put faces to faculty and students in the program (confirming reports that they
are the most social bunch), but without linking up particular
interest statements to people on this first page; again, leaving this
work of making connections to the browser personal page by
personal page. Within faculty pages a diversity of formats
underscore, in common, an emphasis on research and scholarly
production with a keen absence of personalizing information.
Graduate students’ links fare even worse, pointing directly to
e-mail addresses without a blurb on interest. Support staff spaces
seems to include shortcut points that are of use to the department
primarily, giving no clues to the people whom we represent by
form and regulation links. Finally, in the one space the
anthropology department has named in a way that might say the
most about who we are and what we do, “about us” is a rather
generic blurb which could easily be transplanted onto many an
anthropology department elsewhere. Without dynamic and
specific language, the statement “about us” relies on web-page
links (as is the pattern of much of the site) to be the main
‘attractors’ to relevant information. On the whole, the disjointed
linking dependence for information, nonspecific department
statement, and generally impersonal narratives of faculty work to
generate an impression that the UIUC anthropology department
is either itself a disjointed environment or that it is making a good
number of assumptions in presupposing that the research
records of its faculty are the main attractions for those seeking
information about the department. Further, the hierarchical values
of importance the department places on its ‘people’ may be
reflected (or the impression may be generated thus) through the
amount of space and effort devoted to including information about
staff and graduate students. My interest in examining the web-
texts produced by the anthropology department in its self-
representation come from my position as a graduate student of
color within the department. I wanted to see to what degree or to
what ends some of the on-the-ground discourses within our
department were being promoted/reflected through our website.
Department administrators’ recent commitments to departmental
community and diversity were not readily visible as areas of
importance on the website through a cursory textual analysis.
Displays of uniformity through faculty emphasis on their works
and research are juxtaposed with an overall absence of
personality on their webpages. The salient message to be taken
from anthropology’s website text is a reputation for scholarly
research, which is oddly and coldly presented for the most part.

Initial Exercises: Leanne initially describes her entrance to graduate studies at
UIUC in this way, “Oh, they offered me money,” by which she
A Practice Interview means her fellowship funding, but it is a description which has
undertones of class thematic preoccupations. Taking this cue from my source much of the grounding of further analysis runs back to this premise. I wish I could say now how much of its structural appearance in the interview was cued by my own interest in this theme or how much could be said to be the way Leanne really envisions her own experiences. She moves on at rapid clip in multiple institutional and social explanations for her coming to UIUC: diversity, relative institutional status, and the structure of her research project. Leanne is an anthropology student and I smile at hearing her describe her presence at UIUC in meta-analytical ways. It is evident to myself that she employs, to some degree, a very anthropological lens in making sense of her own life. Looking for keyword signals of possible patterns in her speaking is actually made easier due to the fact that I am typing, in real time, notes on much of what she is saying. In this way I am taking advantage of the fact that Leanne, as an anthropology student, understands the process of interview and may not feel that my technique is as impersonal as other subjects might if I am not engaged in all of the physical cues of conversation and interpersonal interest. Yet, because she is an anthropology student I am careful to keep the screen of typing hidden as I do it, least she anticipate my questions based on seeing my transcription. One repeated word caught my attention quickly, Leanne described UIUC as a 'safe school' several times. “Safe school?” I ask. Leanne is prompted here to reveal her previous advisor’s preoccupations with class, Leanne’s own identification with a blue-collar background and subsequent pushes on the part of her advisor to apply for Ivy League graduate institutions. At first I take her contextualized meaning of ‘safe school’ to mean that her advisor believed Leanne would fit in better at UIUC because it is not in the upper-echelon of class categories and that Leanne’s blue collar background would make a more comfortable fit here. For clarification, I ask Leanne if my breakdown is correct. She hesitates, conceding, “yes, that was maybe an undercurrent, but she [her advisor] thought that being it was not Ivy League meant it was a safer bet for me to get in here [UIUC].” Thus ‘safe school’ for Leanne means a ‘safe bet’ and not, as I supposed a ‘safe class fit’. She references status where I thought it was class. It is, retrospectively, a telling moment in the interview that had I not asked for clarification on would have had different meanings for her term ‘safe school’. And as I am seeing it now, that pivotal instance in which I pushed through as a question my own presuppositions about what Leanne was talking about, well, it probably framed the remainder of her responses in terms of class preoccupations. She refers to an income-supplementing job at a supermarket in terms of class,
commenting that professors and other professionals who recognize her sometimes make chiding comments about the fact that she works there. As if her occupation in the world of supermarkets stands in opposition to [their] assumed ideas about her imagined class in academia. When I ask her what her previous institution was like (the conversation naturally segueing), Leanne continues in ‘anthro-speak’ to pull up class-themed discourses. She uses such descriptors as: small, “redneck territory”, coal economy, food industry, KKK activity; descriptors which, I would argue are used to communicate in our potentially overlapping symbols of white, blue-collar class and anthropological views of demographics. In one elegant paragraph I have her down as describing the sociality, racism, economy, and even cross-cultural comparison of the town she last came from. Interestingly, she did not say much about the institution itself. A good example of anthropologists being all ‘anthropological’ together. The interview ends with Leanne’s reflective turns on the way she believes other people see her, “cheap, dowdy”, again invoking class, perhaps. This is part of her response to my inquiry, “Do you regret coming here.” Feeling through her answer that we have not only strayed far from the original question, but that she is moving into personal and possibly emotional territory we end the interview shortly. The tricky point in this interview was largely informed by the disciplinary background of my informant. As an anthropology major myself, I could definitely find moments in which Leanne used anthropological analysis to answer questions and explain her own life. In the environment of an academic institution I believe that it will be likely that students I interview may have their answers influenced by the frameworks of their particular disciplines as well. I wonder now how careful I must be to avoid or maybe even to include the language of any student-informant’s academic background to make sense of their responses? For instance, is a psychology major going to give examples of emotionality or cognition in their narrative? Maybe a sociology student would talk about demographic or statistical sets by way of illustrating categorical experiences. ? An interesting question to consider. Were I to do this interview over, however, I might not choose an anthropology major or another student with whom I share an academic perspective. In this case it was too easy for the process to slip into thematic descriptions I could not untangle from particular meaning. Interviewing another anthropologist, rather, was like two octopi wrestling, both turning discursively, analytically, and metaphorically along the same lines of movement. Being students of the same ilk it was too easy to describe one another in those ways.
Question: UPDATED QUESTION: In the wake of the post-mascot era at UIUC and with the advent of American Indian Studies as an academic unit, I am asking the question, “What would you say to someone who wanted to know about American Indians?” One rather infamous line of pro-mascot fans has been that ‘chief illiniwek’ was a popular cultural vector for educating (non-Native) people about American Indians in general. A simultaneous response by the relatively recent (about 2002) building of the Native American House and American Indian Studies is that the academic unit was the best venue for instructing (non-Native) people about Native persons, communities, and issues. It is my hope that uncovering post-mascot responses to what “Indian” signifies and where information can be found about Native people will reveal the extent to which the campus community still does or does not (or has potential toward movement from) see “Indian” as ‘chief illiniwek’. This project will also aid in the discovery of how aware the larger campus community is about the existing AIS program and where they might go to find out about Native peoples. In the wake of the post-mascot era at UIUC and with the advent of American Indian Studies as an academic unit, I am asking the question, “So, what do you know about Indians?” One rather infamous line of pro-mascot fans has been that ‘chief illiniwek’ was a popular cultural vector for educating (non-Native) people about American Indians in general. A simultaneous response by the relatively recent (about 2002) building of the Native American House and American Indian Studies is that the academic unit was the best venue for instructing (non-Native) people about Native persons, communities, and issues. Within my personal experience as a Pro-Indigenous (and anti-mascot) Native activist, in the UIUC context the equating of all things Native or “Indian” has largely been with relation to the mascot. For example, many non-Native people on campus when encountering a Native person at the institution will ask as a second or first question, “so, what do you think about the mascot?” It is my hope that uncovering post-mascot responses to what “Indian” signifies on campus will reveal the extent to which the campus community still does or does not (or has potential toward movement from) see “Indian” as ‘chief illiniwek’.

Plan: UPDATED PLAN: Tape-recording encounters of persons met on the UIUC campus in response to the question “What would you say to someone who wanted to know about American Indians?” Various public campus locations in mind: the central quad, departmental hallways, and perhaps American Indian Studies classrooms (as a contrasting reference). In very practical terms I would select people on the basis of perceived availability: are
they in a hurry to get elsewhere, are they alone, or are they wearing pro-chief insignia? I am looking for folks who have the time and inclination to answer my question. To take track of a 'demographic' I want to ask as preliminary questions, perhaps their major and year in school along with noting gender and race on my notes. Tape-recording encounters of persons met on the UIUC campus in response to the question "so, what do you know about Indians?" Various public campus locations in mind: the central quad, departmental hallways, and perhaps American Indian Studies classrooms (as a contrasting reference). In very practical terms I would select people on the basis of perceived availability: are they in a hurry to get elsewhere, are they alone, or are they wearing pro-chief insignia? I am looking for folks who have the time and inclination to answer my question. To take track of a 'demographic' I want to ask as preliminary questions, perhaps their major and year in school along with noting gender and race if they self-identify as Native (there's a list of an alleged population of about 120 students who do, but we only 'see' about a dozen drop in to NAH/AIS in any given year). Do other questions about background seem relevant here? And then, I will ask without priming or further context my question, asking the subjects to respond 'off the top of your head' to "so, what do you know about Indians?" I cannot anticipate themes in the responses beyond the stereotypical: chief, Dances with Wolves, historical, etc. It is not my intention to embarrass people about their lack of knowledge or to correct misconceptions. And to this end I will offer prior to asking the question that those participants who are not satisfied with their answers to the query may ask that their responses not be included. Or is this a concession I should not have to make? Further, in the interest of fair de-briefing I will offer to make available to all respondents copies of my preliminarily analyses through email. And everybody gets a pseudonymn (I'll even let them chose one).

Data: Spectacle of a Researcher

A Project Interview

Two weeks relying on crutches had dampened my self-esteem; it was becoming more apparent as I flailed my arms recklessly at another passerby’s approach. I was fixed in the center of a main thoroughfare on the quad, trying to attract attention long enough to politely solicit other students to serve as my research participants. Pedestrians seemed to flow past me in a nearly eight-foot zone of avoidance as though I had an invisible force-field of space through which their contact could mean contamination. Or, maybe I was being a bit sensitive. But, I had good reason…

After watching strangers make dramatic dashes to hold doors for me, sometimes talking to my leg as I crutched past, “What happened? Does
it hurt?” and facing the fashion challenges of a frumpy back-pack and lumped-up jacket squeezed by crutches—Well, I felt as though I was getting more attention than I really cared to have. And yet, here on the quad and subsequently in the Union I was not being noticed in a way that would help me to complete the interview assignment.

Socio-cultural anthropology encourages researchers to reflexively report their positionality in order to engage the processes which lead to particular selections and interpretations in ethnographic works. I argue that this brief experience with challenged mobility directly affected my capacity to carry out interviews and subsequently impaired my research design. I use my episodic encounters with a category of subjectivity, new to me, to illustrate the ways in which researcher positions both socially inscribed and self-represented impact methodology.

Site navigation was the first and most obvious limitation I faced in the collecting of interviews. Every door, stair, curb, tree root, pedestrian, and walking surface proved a potential impediment to simply getting around. The world began to seem quite foreign with all of these unforeseen (hitherto invisible) obstacles to negotiate, and much of my attention was concentrated on predicting timing, routes, and physical strategies. Yet, being a recent change, my dependence on crutches was an event which I had not accounted for in my research site selections. The wide, open spaces of the quad made it too easy for other pedestrians to simply go around me, avoiding the contact which required us to be close enough to engage. Likewise, it became evident that even if I could establish connections with students on the quad, moving to a space in which I might conduct an interview would take up a good deal of time. The appeal of brief time I wanted to make to my interviewees, “I only need about five minutes,” would no longer be accurate in these new circumstances.

I also had the disquieting thought that hobbling about before my interlocutor might make me appear less than scholarly in their eyes. Interestingly, I do not personally view persons in similar situations as less serious or intelligent, but I somehow have the impression that this is a potential prejudice against the disabled. In my case I had to grapple with how much of this possible assessment would be real or imagined.

I moved on to the Union, thinking that people would be more densely packed and therefore approachable. Unfortunately, spaces in the Union are constructed in ways which tend to encourage students to either cluster in groups around tables or which foster very individualized, semi-private spheres for the purposes of reading and studying. The vision of so many i-podded students in the vending room intimidated me, and the recent hits to my self-esteem had eroded my confidence to the point that I was suddenly shy about ‘interrupting’ people (I know many of you will find that last part hard to believe). Also, being cautioned in class about the potentially coercive dynamic of requesting
interviews from individuals situated within parties of other persons, I knew that students sitting around together were not going to be easy to approach. Besides which, the prospect of having to stagger up to an entire table of witnesses to my struggles was humiliating enough to prevent my attempts.

Recalling readings from our class which recommended the changing of tactics when finding information becomes difficult, I decided to creatively reevaluate my approach to finding interviewees. Drawing from my experience with attracting attention on the quad I saw that what I needed to concentrate on were people who were not in motion. I began scouting the Union with a new sort of subject in mind: a captive audience. Thinking that the Registered Student Organization desks were a likely place to find people sitting around I headed up to the second floor of the Union. Unfortunately, there were few students around so early in the day and those present seemed thoroughly absorbed in urgent-looking work. But, surveying the desks gave me another idea, and so I went back to the first floor where I had noticed a student-worker ensconced in an alcove behind a desk.

Scuttle-thumping up on my crutches I had plenty of time to observe that this desk did not have a computer or any literature nearby and that the student looked completely bored. Appealing to her sense of collegiality, I explained my predicament, ‘I’m on these awful crutches and people just walk all the way around me, and I’m trying to catch their attention so I can get them to answer a question that will only take five minutes for this class on research methods, you seem to have some time on your hands, would you be interested, it would be completely confide…’ and here she cut me off to say, “Sorry, we are not allowed to do anything like that while we are on duty.” On duty? What was she talking about? I glanced around but saw no signs of crime-fighting equipment behind that desk.

Undeterred and desperate, I remembered another desk in the basement of the Union where there were other student workers. The two women I subsequently interviewed there seemed pleased to be asked to participate. Noticing my mobility challenges they kindly suggested a semi-private space, away from the desk but not too far for me to hobble to, where I held my interviews. I had been so focused on finding any research participants, however, that I did not immediately make a connection with the sampling problem posed by these two interviewees.

Asking my question, ‘If someone wanted to get information on American Indians, what would you tell them,’ brought to light the biased knowledge that their positions as particular student-workers gave them. These two women were already somewhat familiar with the Native American House on campus, through their ‘outreach’ work at the Nevada street cultural houses. The interviews were disappointingly brief in this regard, because they knew exactly where to direct people who
had questions about American Indians and could give the precise location of the unit as well. I will reveal more about the interviews themselves in a piece to follow this one. However, allowing my physically based frustrations with data collecting to shape a myopic goal of finding any participants in turn had prevented me from paying close attention to my surroundings. The desk I had just approached, if I had been thinking carefully, would be one which I would have wanted to avoid. These student workers were engaged in assignments elsewhere on campus which gave them an informational edge in thinking about sources of information about American Indians. There was nothing of the spirit of ‘random’ selection in my method, something which I required in order to base my research on ‘average’ students. Had I even briefly considered or envisioned what research in my crutches-dependent role would look like, I might have been prepared to choose better sites for gathering potential participants. Likewise, taking stock of my disposition on this day might have told me that I was really not in the mood to conduct participant recruitment with the confidence required. My experiences with this first round of interviewing demonstrates the ways in which neglecting a thoughtful accounting of subjectivity and subject-position as a researcher can lead to some pretty exciting but potentially unproductive mistakes.

**Data:** I did a database search of the Student Life and Culture Archives for records on “American Indian” and “Native American”, respectively. I had hoped there might be some information about the (2002) Native American cultural house and/or American Indian Studies. Surely, I thought, these groundbreaking moments in campus history would be noted somewhere. Wrong. Here are the results yielded by my search: American Indian: NCTE/Racism and Bias Task Force File, 1968-80 Mentions the inclusion of guides to American Indian literary sources... Native American: The Gladys and Reginald Laubin collection Two white persons ‘playing Indian’ from the late 1920’s through early 1990’s... and Two photographs from Soussa of Indians in Oklahoma? I was personally disappointed to find that actual Native peoples on campus were not represented in our archives. Whereas “Chief Illiniwek” yielded at least 9 record hits!

**Data Continued** Sara is a pre-med tracked junior in a health related field at UIUC. Karen is a junior with a concentration in Spanish. Our interviews take place near their station as student-workers for a major, student service organization. I interview the women one at a time and
separately, beginning with Sara.

I ask her the following: “the question I’m asking everybody is if someone were to ask you about how they could find out about American Indian people, what would you tell them if they were looking for information?”

She responds: “if someone wanted to know I would probably tell them to look for like over the internet or if it was UIUC I would tell them to maybe like go to the Native American House and contact them and then go there to learn more about it.” Part of Sara’s duties seem to include outreach to the cultural houses on Nevada street, so she is perhaps more familiar with its resources than the average student.

I press her for more information, asking her to explain what the Native American House is. She replies that it is a cultural house and that it is for Native people, but she has only a vague idea about what its mission might be. She volunteers that there are also both Asian American and “Latino American” houses on Nevada street and that there is a public, fall semester event on the street which features food.

Realizing that she has been to Nevada street and is familiar with it, I want to know if she has heard of American Indian Studies, the academic unit next door to the Native American House. I ask her if there are any classes offered about Native peoples. She answers twice that she does not think that there are classes offered, instead she associates the Native American House with “lunches and stuff like that.”

Karen is Sara’s coworker, and she also has outreach duties on Nevada street. She specifies the “Latin American” cultural house, La Casa, as her weekly service area. I ask her the same question I posed to Sara and, predictably, she also says she would refer people to the Native American House.

Karen demonstrates a familiarity with Nevada street, (naming the other cultural houses there) but like Sara she does not seem to know of the American Indian Studies unit next door to the Native American House: “I don’t know if we have like Native American studies, but like if there was like a teacher for that I’d tell them to contact that.”

And, in spite of her frequent visits to Nevada street, Karen admits that she has never been to the Native American House, and she has some difficulty recalling the placement of the other cultural houses: “there’s either two [cultural houses] on each side of [Nevada] street or three on the other [side opposite La Casa].”
The two interviews of the student-workers provide examples of the relative obscurity of American Indian Studies on the UIUC campus. Both women seem not to know of the academic unit, hiding in plain sight next door to the more familiar, cultural branch of the Native American House. In light of the physical proximity of AIS to both the Native cultural house and other cultural houses on Nevada street this invisibility is quite puzzling, especially amongst those who work in the area.

Perhaps I will conduct the next set of interviews from participants on Nevada street to test the limits of the extent to which AIS is not a known source of information about Native people.

Data: Following up on previous interviews of persons familiar with Nevada street, I changed the location of my investigation to the neighborhood itself. I had been surprised in uncovering the lack of awareness of the American Indian studies program by students who worked in outreach capacities at the cultural houses on Nevada. In light of this discovery I wanted to know to what degree students at the cultural houses were familiar with the program of AIS. I interviewed both Ashley and Leslie on videotape where I encountered them at separate Nevada street locations. Ashley appeared to be engaged in a work-related task when I approached her. Ashley initially responded to the question, “if someone was asking for information on American Indians, what would you tell them,” with a referral to the internet. However, she quickly critiqued this resource as unreliable. In addition to the internet she recommended “actually talking to someone who is from that heritage, to learn more about that.” She did not reference either the Native American cultural house or American Indian studies, nor did she offer further resources when prompted, and so our interview ended. Leslie I found hanging out in a student space of another Nevada street locale. Her first cited resource included the library, both the undergraduate and engineering libraries specifically. Secondly, Leslie referred to the Native American house cultural center and volunteered that it was located on Nevada street. As Ashley had, Leslie also suggested finding a Native person to talk with, “because a lot of people with such cultural background can be vital in learning information about that culture.” Leslie further implied that this would be a positive, discovery experience all around, “if you know a Native American feel free to ask about their background, so that…your horizons can be expanded.” I pursued Leslie’s mention of the Native American House and asked her about classes. She responded, “classes, I’m not sure of, but I do know they have pamphlets and brochures, and they have people that
you can talk to.” She further proposed that the Native American House likely had “learning sessions” similar to the noon-time “Lunch and Learn” events at other centers. She emphasized here, “but I DO know that they [the Native American House] have people you can talk to, people that can assist you if you would like to have further information.” I was again surprised by the findings that even amongst their ‘neighbors’ on Nevada street, the American Indian studies program was virtually unheard of, and that even the Native American cultural house was not necessarily understood as being a place to find Native people.

Discuss: History

The University of Illinois has, for the past sixteen years, been an institution with a race-based mascot, ‘chief illiniwek’, which was widely critiqued by many Native people, particularly the Native campus community. As an educational provider, the role which the University maintained in promoting and perpetuating stereotypical images of Native peoples was often highlighted in ironic comparison with its lack of Native student services and American Indian studies courses. Over the past sixteen years the Native campus community called for an end to the use of a harmful, stereotypical mascot while simultaneously lobbying University administration for both a safe Native student space on campus and a commitment to education about Native peoples in the form of American Indian studies.

In 2002 the Native American House was finally granted space and allotted resources to begin forming Native student services and programming, and outlined plans for the development of American Indian studies began to solidify. And in 2007 the Board of Trustees passed a resolution which proclaimed an end to the use of ‘chief illiniwek’ as the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign mascot. It is against the backdrop of this history that pilot research was carried out to determine, in part, to what degree students on the UIUC campus are familiar with the educational mission of American Indian studies.

Research

The pilot research conducted through interviews of individual students who are connected to the Nevada street neighborhood, which is the current location of the American Indian studies unit, demonstrates the overall lack of knowledge about the American Indian studies program at UIUC. Both students who worked in outreach positions to cultural houses on Nevada street and
students who were interviewed in spaces on that street were unfamiliar with the academic unit even though most had some familiarity with the cultural Native American House.

These research findings stemmed from student responses to the question "if someone were to ask you where they might find information on American Indians, what might you tell them?" In only one instance even was the cultural Native American House a first answer, although it was mentioned by most of the participants. The internet and actual Native people were each given as the second most popular resources, followed by one referral to the library and one referral to a “teacher” of “Native American studies” (the student did not know if there actually was a program; the comment was speculative).

Impressions of the Native American House suggested that there was a tendency for students to collapse all of the various Nevada street houses into one category as “cultural” houses, which levels their differences. This homogenous perspective of the Nevada street neighborhood units may have contributed to the invisibility of both the American Indian studies units and the other academic programs on Nevada street: African American studies and Asian American studies, respectively. As well, the thoughts students shared about the nature of the cultural houses and their missions were presented as vague identifications with events such as open houses, food tastings, and the ever indistinct activity of “programming”. And, while the Native American House cultural center was mentioned as a place to find information about American Indians, only one participant in this study connected it with actual Native people. Yet, even in that instance, the Native American House was construed as a place for Native people in a proprietary sense that suggested that the house was a space socially segregated from the larger campus community. Another student made a similarly distinct disconnection of the Native American House, but this time the remarks offered indicated that the house was both a resource site for information about Native peoples and simultaneously not a space comprised of Native people.

Preliminary research, therefore, suggests that the American Indian studies program is generally overlooked even by students familiar with the Nevada street area. It seems that the tendency to imagine the Nevada street addresses as a consolidated block of "cultural" events and programs leads to the invisibility of the academic units generally and American Indian studies specifically. Furthermore, indefinite ideas about the people and
resources of the Native American House seemed to be a common phenomenon even amongst students who frequent Nevada street. However, this pilot research has not produced other possible reasons for the obscurity of American Indian studies, hiding in plain sight next door to the Native American House. Unfortunately, judging by the continued visibility of 'chief illiniwek' supporters on campus, more students are likely to be familiar with the retired mascot than the growing academic unit of American Indian studies.

**Research Proposal:**

**EUI Links:** A search of the EUI project archives under "Native American", "American Indian", "American Indian Studies", and "chief illiniwek" yielded disappointing results for a potentially related project for my topic. "Native American" and all things "Indian" had nothing to do with where one might find information about Native peoples. Pedagogically, I have difficulty linking 'chief illiniwek' with my project. It is problematic to have associations with Native bound up in co-constitutive ways with the mascot. However, my interviews may very well demonstrate the continuing relationship between these two categoric signifiers, in which case I may be compelled to put the projects of the mascot in conversation with my own research. I would like to move holding off from this step until or unless it becomes inevitable. I argue that pre-supposing connections at this point in the research carries both political and ideological themes which I am attempting to interrogate/disrupt.

**Reflect:**

**Recommendations:** The University of Illinois has launched an "Inclusive Illinois" campaign to demonstrate a commitment to and tolerance of diversity on campus. I recommend strong, concrete promotion of both the American Indian studies program and other 'ethnic' studies programs on campus as educational components of the spirit of the "Inclusive Illinois" initiatives. 1. Required U.S. minority culture course for all undergraduate majors. 2. Wide and frequent advertisement of U.S. minority academic programs: Latina/o studies, African American studies, Asian American studies, and American Indian studies. 3. Updated campus materials to list the location of American Indian studies (campus map, campus unit search on website, etc.) as many of these materials still show the 1204 address as being the home of the Office of Minority Student Affairs.