FRAMING PSEUDO-INDIAN MASCOTS: THE CASE OF CLEVELAND

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by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Critical activist and academic responses to pseudo-Indian mascots have proliferated since the early 1990s (King 2004). A number of social critics agree with Strong’s (2004: 83) assessment that “the demeaning objectification accomplished by these racist symbols is not disconnected from other forms of subordination.” More than 100 organizations in the United States, including NOW, the NAACP, the National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Education Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, and dozens of federally recognized tribes, oppose the stereotypical images portrayed by pseudo-Indian mascots. Recently, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has joined this nation-wide effort to eliminate objectifying images of the United States’ Indigenous population. In March of 2005, the NCAA issued a press release announcing that “mascots, nicknames or images deemed hostile or abusive in terms of race, ethnicity or national origin” no longer would be permitted at any of the 88 NCAA championship events (http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/media_and_events/press_room/2005/august/20050805_exec_comm_rls.html). Despite increasing awareness of these mascots as a social problem, professional sports franchises, such as the Cleveland “Indians,” Atlanta “Braves,” and
Washington “Redskins,” continue to broadcast stereotypical representations of American Indians to millions (and possibly billions) of people each year. Their persistence in propagating these images thoroughly has saturated United States public and private space with formulaic and hackneyed versions of *Indianness*.

Members of American Indian communities and their allies nationwide struggle to eradicate these objectifying images, which strip away true American Indian historical, cultural, and social realities to reveal “symbolic good luck charms” that merit affection, but not respect (Black 2002). This struggle was initiated in the 1970’s by members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and continues today in myriad forms. Pseudo-Indian mascots are utilized by the sports teams of public and private schools at all levels of education as well as by professional sports franchises including, but not limited to those noted above. Despite nearly four decades of protest against the use of such stereotypical imagery, in which members of the Indigenous population have formulated problematic definitions of these mascots in the United States socio-cultural sphere, millions of sports fans continue to rally behind thousands of different icons that falsely represent the Native peoples of this country as “Indians,” “Redskins,” “Warriors,” “Braves,” “Chiefs,” and a multitude of other identities, classifications, images, and attitudes with which this racialized and subordinated population has been ascribed.

Opponents of pseudo-Indian imagery believe this issue makes transparent the institutional racism that perpetuates grievous inequalities in the United States. In a cultural milieu in which the majority of participants are fixated on the oft-recited yet esoteric values of “freedom,” “equality,” and “democracy,” however, claims of prejudice,
discrimination, and/or racism frequently are summarily dismissed. When dominant members of the culture are implicated in the discriminatory or racist actions due to their participation in sporting rituals to which they fervently are attached, the dismissal of such claims often is immediate and forceful. Thus, the claims-making campaigns of groups that both support and oppose pseudo-Indian mascots are of sociological interest.

The sociological study of social problems is grounded in social constructionist theory, which attempts to understand the interactional processes through which perceptions of reality are shaped. In social problems research, the creative constructions of new meanings that can be assigned to contested aspects of the socio-cultural sphere are referred to as framing processes. “Frames,” or categories of meaning that allow people living in complex environments to see similarities among things, conditions, or people that are objectively diverse (Loseke 2003), are used by claims-making groups to convey information about conditions in society perceived as problematic (Snow et al 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Benford and Snow 2000). My research invariably is situated within the constructionist perspective because I seek to understand how the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots has been defined in a specific socio-cultural sphere.

Northeast Ohio is an exceptional location for my study of the meanings applied to pseudo-Indian mascots because it is home of the Cleveland “Indians” baseball franchise, which utilizes and profits from pseudo-Indian imagery. The franchise’s palpable use of such imagery is denoted by its name and also by its mascot, “Chief Wahoo.” King (2004: 4) aptly describes the “antiquated, fictitious, and racist, … ,
“notion] of Indianness” encapsulated in Chief Wahoo, whose “exaggerated nose,” “buffoonish smile,” and “single feather” offer “a false, malicious, and bigoted parody of Native Americans.” Cleveland also is home to the non-profit antiracist social movement organization named the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance (hereafter, the Committee). Formed in 1991, this SMO continues to fight for the elimination of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s “Indians” moniker and grinning, red-faced mascot. Because Cleveland is home to both of these organizations which proffer oppositional meanings of pseudo-Indian mascots, it is a suitable location for a study of claims-making surrounding this issue.

My study of the meanings applied to pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland socio-cultural realm is designed to address two research questions. How salient is the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots to Cleveland community members? How has the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots been defined by social actors within the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere? To answer these questions, I analyze the content of articles published in Northeast Ohio’s mainstream news publication, the Cleveland Plain Dealer. In Chapter Three, I thoroughly explicate the methodologies utilized for this research. Prior to this discussion, however, I first examine the literatures on pseudo-Indian mascots, social inequalities, and framing processes. Following this review of the literature, I return to an explication of my content analytic procedures in Chapter Three and continue with a discussion of my findings in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In recent years, increased scholarly attention has been granted to the issue of pseudo-Indian sports mascots (King and Springwood 2000). The academic research which critically analyzes and evaluates this issue is both ambitious and broad in scope. It is situated within myriad academic disciplines, including communication, education, law, psychology, anthropology, and sociology, and even within these disciplines, the works are fragmented into the numerous specialty areas associated with each. In the following paragraphs, I outline some of the major trends in this area of research. Following this review of the literature which expressly discusses the use of pseudo-Indian mascots in the sporting realm, I turn to the other areas of research that inform my own sociological study of the meanings applied to pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. These critical areas include research on framing processes and social inequalities in the contemporary United States.

PSEUDO-INDIAN MASCOTS

Although, as I have noted, academic studies of pseudo-Indian sports mascots take many forms, all of the research that I have encountered purports a negative evaluation of the use of these mascots and their associated stereotypical imagery in the cultural realm.
Whether the authors discuss the use of pseudo-Indian mascots in primary, secondary, or post-secondary educational institutions (Connolly 2000; Baca 2004) or the use of these images by professional sport organizations (Sigelman 1998; Staurowsky 1998; Fenelon 1999; Staurowsky 2000), each of them draws the same conclusion – pseudo-Indian mascots must be eradicated if we truly wish to designate an equal space for American Indian people in the contemporary United States. Much of the literature focuses on the social, cultural and historical fictions which have been propagated and perpetuated by false representations of Indigenous America in the sporting realm. This literature falls into two broad and often overlapping categories, including research that outlines the historical fictions that prompted the use of pseudo-Indian mascots (Staurowsky 1998; Connolly 2000; King and Springwood 2000) and research that discusses how the use of these mascots disseminates and sustains modern mythologies about American Indian people (Davis 1993; Pewewardy 1997; Fenelon 1997, 1999; Staurowsky 2000; King and Springwood 2000, 2001; King et. al. 2002; Churchill 2004). One of the broadest and most thorough reviews of the literature in this area is a response to Sports Illustrated’s “Indian Wars,” the cooperative effort of a number of influential scholars, including King, Staurowsky, Baca, Davis, and Pewewardy (2002). Both of these articles are described in more detail below; first, however, I provide a synopsis of the pseudo-Indian mascot literature by discipline and methodology.

Legal and educational scholarship emphasizes the “racially hostile environment” created by pseudo-Indian sports mascots (Harvard Law Review Association 1999; Baca 2004). This argument against Indian mascots is predicated on Title VI of the 1964 Civil
Rights Act, which states, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Baca 2004). Opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots have insisted that public stadiums and public schools prominently displaying such mascots openly discriminate against American Indian people, and therefore, directly violate the law. Baca (2004: 77) insists that American Indian children forced to attend public schools that embrace stereotypical Indian mascots are especially at risk because they learn of their “inferiority” at an early age and this harsh lesson has profoundly negative effects on their entire educational experience. Psychological research confirms these negative effects by illustrating the negative impact of stereotypical racial imagery on the self-esteem of American Indian children (Chamberlin 1999; Fryberg and Markus 2003).

King (2004b: 30) asserts that the “study of sport remains marginal to anthropology,” but some anthropological research has taken up this issue. For instance, Slowikowski (1993) and Miller (1999) describe the persistence of pseudo-Indian mascots within the athletic realm in terms of “cultural performance.” By situating sporting phenomena within this broader symbolic context, they “acknowledge the power of sporting events to create culturally shared beliefs and values” (emphasis in original, Miller 1999: 189). Thus, these authors purport that pseudo-Indian mascots “evoke a false sense of history” (Miller 1999: 195) by allowing sports fans to “invent” or “select” specific elements of a disjointed and inaccurate past to incorporate into cultural models of the present (Slowikowski 1993).
Few quantitative studies have been conducted in this area of study and social scientists who have attempted such research typically have focused on the social attributes (such as race, gender, educational background, age, etc.) of pseudo-Indian mascot supporters and opponents. Two of these analyses were based on surveys of university students; these studies focused on student perceptions of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of “Chief Wahoo” and the “Indians” nickname (Fenelon 1997) and student perceptions of the University of North Dakota’s (UND’s) “Fighting Sioux” nickname and logo (Williams 2007). A third study utilized two telephone surveys, one conducted nationally and one conducted in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and northern Virginia, to obtain respondents’ perceptions of the “Redskins” team name. Although the results of each study varied, all of the researchers found that whites were far more likely to support retaining these nicknames and mascots, while ethnic and racial minorities were more likely to support changes to team names and their associated Indian imagery.

These findings conflict with two public opinion polls that “[claim] to represent the views of American Indians” (Clark 2005: 228). The better known of these polls was commissioned by the Peter Harris Research Group and publicized in a March 2002 issue of *Sports Illustrated* (*SI*). According to the poll of 351 Native Americans and 743 sports fans, most people in the general public, including American Indians, support the use of pseudo-Indian mascots. Price (2002) maintains that a full 75% of Native American respondents in *SI*’s poll said they were not offended by the name “Redskins,” perhaps one of the most controversial nicknames in sports today, and 69% felt that continued use
of the “Redskins” moniker was acceptable. The article leaves readers with the impression that people who protest the use of such mascots are grossly out of touch with real Native sentiment on the issue. In fact, Price (2002) concludes that the mascot issue illustrates a “total disconnect between Indian activists and the Native American population” (emphasis mine).

Two academic articles were published in response to SI’s controversial article (King et. al. 2002; Clark 2005). These authors assert that the poll was conducted with “dreadful research ethics” and has been circulated throughout the popular media to “communicate the illusion of agreement among all or most Natives” (Clark 2005: 229).

To lend support to their own claims, King et. al. (2002) disclose that neither the Research Group nor Sports Illustrated allowed anyone access to the survey methodologies used or the identification of interview subjects. They also failed to show how their poll compared to similar others conducted in different domains (King et. al. 2002). Furthermore, each of these authors alleges that authentic Native voices have been silenced by white cooption of Native identity. This point clearly is explicated by Springwood (2004: 56), who argues that white people “rhetorically [fabricate] Indianness in debates” to craft authority and “obscure, if not dissolve, Native voices.”

The inability of researchers to obtain accurate information regarding authentic American Indian heritage when conducting polls and utilizing other quantitative research methodologies is problematic. Thus, most research on this issue is qualitative in nature and the case study, specifically, is the most frequently used research methodology. Some studies look at the histories and contemporary uses of pseudo-Indian mascots across cases
(Davis 1993; Connolly 2000; King and Springwood 2000), while others exclusively focus on one social setting in which these mascots exist (Staurowsky 1998, 2000; Farnell 2004). Staurowsky’s (1998, 2000) research is centered on the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of the “Indians” moniker and “Chief Wahoo” mascot, and consequently, her findings are particularly valuable to my own study of the meanings applied to pseudo-Indian mascots in Cleveland. Staurowsky exposes the true history of the Cleveland team’s name (1998) and utilizes legal discourse to reveal how the team’s ownership of this name culturally dispossesses American Indians in Cleveland and across the country (2000).

The mascot issue undoubtedly has been amplified by the local, regional, and national struggles of American Indian activists and their allies whose movements to eliminate false representations of the United States’ Indigenous populations from the popular culture have met with some success. In the SI article mentioned above, Price (2002) declares that the use of Native American names and mascots is “sport’s thorniest word problem.” Although little progress has been made in the professional sporting arena, Price (2002) maintains that “the issue has literally changed the face of sports in the U.S.” by prompting nickname and mascot changes in more than 600 school teams and minor league clubs between 1969 and 2002. Most recently, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) adopted a new policy prohibiting colleges or universities with mascots, nicknames or imagery deemed “hostile or abusive” from participating in NCAA championship competitions.
The retirement of University of Illinois’s long celebrated and frequently debated mascot, Chief Illiniwek, undoubtedly resulted from this ruling. It is important to note that Illiniwek’s retirement was not the result of more than two decades of protest against the mascot on the University of Illinois campus, but rather, this victory for American Indian protestors was produced by the NCAA’s powerful mandate. With no such action taken at the administrative levels of professional sports organizations, it seems likely that this change will have little effect on the nicknames and mascots affiliated with teams such as the Atlanta “Braves,” Chicago “Blackhawks,” Washington “Redskins,” and Cleveland “Indians.” Thus, the study of social problems frames utilized in the environmental spheres within which these mascots exist is tantamount to understanding how opponents of stereotypical Native representations can augment their claims-making strategies in adverse environments. In the following paragraphs, I outline the facets of social problems and social inequalities research that are indispensable to my own study of the meanings used to define the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots in a specific socio-cultural sphere. First, however, I define and explicate the conception of “culture” that provides the foundation for this research project.

CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Cultural analyses are particularly vulnerable to ambiguity and a lack of focus because, as Johnston and Klandermans (1995: 3) note, culture is a “broad” and distinctly
“imprecise” term that also seems “intuitively apparent.” For the purposes of this discussion, Swidler’s (1986) analysis of culture is useful. She purports the image of culture as a “tool kit” which allows people to solve various problems through the creative manipulation of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews. She maintains that culture is “more like a style or a set of skills and habits than a set of preferences or wants” (275). Thus, culture can be conceptualized as “the sense-making tools people use to create [and I would add, re-create] the social world and interpret [and re-interpret] the natural world” (Williams 1996: 370). These definitions of culture are situated within the “performative” tradition of cultural analysis, which accentuates the “cultural stock of knowledge that is required to perform as a member of society” (emphasis mine, Johnston and Klandermans 1995: 6). This tradition is distinct from the “systemic” view of culture, which describes dominant modes of being and acting in the world.

The Construction of Social Problems

Studies incorporating cultural elements into the study of social problems are situated within the social constructionist perspective. Using the constructionist approach, Spector and Kitsuse (1973: 415) define social problems as “the activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions.” This definition purports that social problems literally are constructed by claims-making segments of society, such as social movement organizations. Rather than understanding social problems as objective conditions, researchers using a strict constructionist
approach, like Spector and Kitsuse (1973), understand social conditions to be the subjects of actors’ claims.

Best (2003) advocates a contextual constructionist approach to social problems, which permits sociologists to study claims-making “within its context of culture and social structure” (61). He asserts that the strict constructionist approach of Ibarra and Kitsuse (2003) imposes undue constraints on the social researcher, who almost infallibly will resort to assumptions about objective conditions and commit “ontological gerrymandering,” as noted by Woolgar and Pawluch (1985). The contextual approach, on the other hand, allows the social researcher to remain committed to understanding the construction of social problems, while also permitting the researcher to conclude that one set of claims presents a stronger case. As Best notes, if sociologists study social problems as part of their efforts to understand and improve the world, then a strict constructionist approach is antithetical to their goals. If all claims-makers offer equally valid (or equally invalid) claims, then no socially constructed reality can be deemed problematic. Thus, sociologists interested in alleviating the inequities that pervade our social sphere have little use for purely theoretical, academic arguments that grant equal status to all claims made by any group about social reality, without regard to the empirical bases of these claims or the unequal distribution of power that allows some claims-makers to broadcast their claims more effectively. For instance, the claims-making activities of dominant cultural members who occupy powerful positions in the social structure receive more attention, and therefore, may convince more social actors of
their socially constructed “reality,” regardless of whether the claims are grounded in readily observed realities.

The contextual constructionist approach is appropriate for the study of claims surrounding pseudo-Indian mascots because the groups making claims about this issue are either aided or impeded by their locations within the broader social structure. Those who make claims in support of these mascots are bolstered by their privileged status in a structurally racist society. European Americans own both the sports teams that utilize pseudo-Indian mascots and the media outlets through which claims about the appropriateness of these mascots are broadcast. On the other hand, the American Indians who object to these mascots are constrained by their limited visibility and power in a socio-cultural sphere that reifies white supremacist, hegemonic norms. These terms will be explicated in more detail later. For now, it is essential to continue the current discussion, focused on the construction of the social problem of pseudo-Indian mascots in Cleveland. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the literature on framing processes and the significance of the cultural context within which these framing processes occur.

Framing Social Problems

The construction of social problems requires social actors to engage in meaning-making, or reality construction, through their use of cognitive schemas that resonate with members of the broader society. These cognitive schemas, or “frames,” are the categories of meaning that allow people living in complex environments to see similarities among things, conditions, or people that are objectively diverse (Loseke
This concept is derived from the work of Goffman, who understood frames to be “schemata of interpretation” that allow individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” life events (Goffman quoted in Benford and Snow 2000: 614). The analytic utility of framing processes recently has been brought to the fore by contemporary researchers attempting to understand how social problems frames are used by claims-making groups to convey information about conditions in society perceived as problematic (Snow et al 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Benford and Snow 2000). Actors in this context are engaged in what has been referred to as “the politics of signification,” because they are “actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers” (Benford and Snow 2000: 613). Thus, the framing perspective reinforces the necessary integration of “agency, meaning, and culture” in social problems research (Williams and Kubal 1999: 227).

Social actors engaged in the framing process, therefore, simultaneously are engaged in the construction of reality. They actively employ the framing process, a simplification process that organizes the innumerable objects and occurrences of the socio-cultural sphere, to concretize meaning that will direct future action. The success of the frames constructed and disseminated is dependent upon the frames’ resonance with target audience members. According to Williams and Kubal (1999: 229), “frame resonance proceeds from the sensible notion that while activists have the agency to offer many different frames, some frames ‘work’ better than others.” In other words, individuals and groups who wish to define aspects of the social sphere as problematic
must consciously and strategically choose frames that are meaningful to target audience members. As Johnston and Klandermans (1995: 10) assert, social actors must “[anchor] their definitions of the situation in the collective beliefs of various social groups.”

The multi-organizational field within which framing occurs necessitates an ongoing relationship between framing processes and the broader culture within which frames are dispersed. As Benford and Snow (2000: 628) assert, the “dynamic, ongoing” processes of framing activities do not occur “in a structural or cultural vacuum.” Although the literature indicates a number of contextual factors that affect framing processes (Benford and Snow 2000), one of these factors – cultural opportunities and constraints – is the focus of my own investigation of the frames used to define pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. As I have noted, one SMO (i.e., the Committee) actively has been protesting the use of pseudo-Indian imagery in the Cleveland environment since 1992. More than a decade and a half later the Cleveland baseball franchise continues to use the “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot and at present the franchise shows no indication of discontinuing this Cleveland “tradition.” Furthermore, the continued use of these stereotypical representations of American Indian people seems to be supported broadly by Cleveland-area residents. It is my hope that a study which highlights the cultural elements affecting frame resonance with regard to this issue will contribute to existing research through its discovery and interpretation of the contextual factors that enable pseudo-Indian mascots stubbornly to persist.
Cultural Context

To discover and understand the definitions applied to pseudo-Indian mascots in Cleveland, it is essential to explore how the context of this particular environment impacts framing processes (Benford and Snow 2000; Swidler 1986). Benford and Snow (2000: 629) refer to this cultural material as “the extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives, and the like” that exist in a social sphere. Swidler’s (1986) analysis depicts three distinct cultural components that affect framing processes: existing ideologies, traditions, and common sense assumptions. An ideology is “a highly articulated, self-conscious belief and ritual system” that “may be thought of as a phase in the development of a system of cultural meaning” (Swidler 1986: 279). During “unsettled times,” ideologies contribute to the development of new systems of cultural meaning (Swidler 1986). When individuals and organizations protest the use of pseudo-Indian sports mascots, they form emergent ideologies that make possible the development of new strategies of action. However, these new strategies and guidelines for action are in competition with the culture’s existing ideologies, traditions, and common sense assumptions. It follows, therefore, that these cultural elements provide the cultural framework within which social problem frames are interpreted and evaluated by members of a particular socio-cultural sphere.

The work of Gramsci (1971) helps to underscore this point. Gramsci recognized the hegemonic forces of culture, or the accepted ways of being and acting in the world, and the transformative nature of ideologies, which “question the ‘naturalness’ of the status quo’s power” (Williams 1996: 373). As Williams (1996: 373) states, this analytic
distinction between culture and ideology provides motivated actors with the capacity to “disentangle how the social world should be from how it is” and consequently, legitimate collective action. In other words, for social actors in Cleveland to be mobilized against pseudo-Indian mascots, they must be willing to accept transformative ideologies that push against the hegemonic forces of culture and effectively demonstrate how the current culture perpetuates inequalities affecting American Indian people.

*Cleveland’s Cultural Landscape*: Now that I have discussed the framing concepts and cultural contexts pertinent to the construction of social problems, I briefly describe the environment in which claims surrounding the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery are made. In organizational research, the complex multiorganizational field in which individuals and groups problematize aspects of social reality are called sectors. These sectors include “the set of organizations of interest,…,governmental bodies, funding agencies, and opposing groups, in addition to traditional voluntary associations, advocacy organizations, and local community groups that share a common mission” (Minkoff and McCarthy 2005: 291). I do not wish to describe Cleveland’s entire organizational ecology or even all of the individual or organizational actors engaged in this particular sector; a comprehensive examination of these actors is unnecessary because a brief glimpse into the workings of only one organization in the Cleveland environment, the Cleveland baseball franchise, is necessary to demonstrate the amazing opposition with which frames proffering negative evaluations of pseudo-Indian mascots must compete. Thus, in the following paragraphs, I describe
only one salient element of Cleveland’s cultural landscape – the fervor that surrounds Cleveland “Indians” baseball.

Professional baseball is “one of the city’s oldest traditions” (www.Indians.mlb.com), and therefore, it generates a significant amount of public zeal as well as a considerable portion of public revenue (Staurowsky 2000). Intricately intertwined with this traditional pastime is the Cleveland team’s name, the “Indians,” and mascot, “Chief Wahoo.” The “Indians” moniker first was adopted in 1915, following a series of name changes that occurred between 1869 and 1903 (Fenelon 1997). Likewise, the team’s “Indian” mascot underwent a number of changes between 1915 and 1952. Originally, the Cleveland team used a “more humanlike” Indian mascot, which resembled the profile on a buffalohead nickel (Fenelon 1997). This image was stylized in 1928 and eventually dropped in 1947, when the first “Chief Wahoo” appeared. This “Wahoo,” with its “large hooked nose, toothy grin, gleaming eyes, and exaggerated cheekbones,” was replaced with the image of Chief Wahoo utilized by the Cleveland team today (Fenelon 1997: 3). The current Wahoo, adopted in 1952, has tepee shaped eyes, a reduced (but still exaggerated) nose, and a broad, toothy grin, all of which are framed within a fire-engine red face and are accented by a single feather protruding from the back of the head. While this contemporary version of Chief Wahoo has its share of critics, those who support and sport the mascot in Cleveland far outnumber the Northeast Ohio residents who agree with pejorative assessments of the image.

As Staurowsky (2001: 86) notes, Cleveland’s identity has become fused with the baseball club’s “Indian” identity, “forming a shared tradition around which Clevelanders
rally.” As a result, Cleveland baseball fans, many of whom have formed personal identities around their favorite sports icon, Chief Wahoo, exhibit not only confusion and ambivalence towards claims-makers who insist that Wahoo is inherently racist, but they also exhibit anger and denial when confronted with these claims. For instance, Russell Means, the first national director of the American Indian Movement (AIM), received “hate mail from all over” after he sued the Cleveland baseball franchise over its Chief Wahoo mascot in the late 1970’s. In his autobiography, Means contends that this occasion marked the first and only time in his activist career that such a vehement response to his antiracist organizing occurred (Means 1995: 155).

This brief (and incomplete) description of the socio-cultural environment of Cleveland illustrates how claims made in opposition to the team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery directly compete with the traditions and common sense assumptions of the majority of Cleveland residents. Furthermore, the hegemonic forces of culture in Cleveland designate the baseball team’s name and mascot as acceptable, and even valued, entities within this particular cultural realm. Two aspects of this environment – hegemonic ideologies of white supremacy and the invisible white privilege that is sustained by these ideologies – are not unique to Cleveland culture, but rather, proliferate throughout the United States and across the globe. In the following paragraphs, I explain these prevailing forces and explicate their problematic effects on the “meaning work” undertaken by those who wish to eliminate stereotypical portrayals of America’s Indigenous peoples.
WHITE SUPREMACY AND WHITE PRIVILEGE

Mills (2003: 36) asserts that the concept of white supremacy has fallen into disfavor and its contemporary usage in social analyses typically is “restricted to formal juridico-political domination,” such as that exemplified by slavery in the United States or apartheid in South Africa. However, if we understand white supremacy as a system, or set of systems, as Mills suggests, then we recognize that “power relations can survive the formal dismantling of their more overt supports” (2003: 36). In other words, the complex and deeply entrenched nature of a system such as white supremacy can be neither dismissed nor extinguished in one grand gesture (or two, or three, or four, …). Thus, creating formal rules of white supremacist rejection in the so-called “political” realm does not and can not overturn all of the systems of thought, culture, and/or material reality that persist in recreating white supremacist ideologies.

Furthermore, in a world that has been dominated historically by whites, ideologies of white supremacy persist unnoticed, particularly by those who benefit from the Eurocentric values that such ideologies espouse. White people, who occupy privileged positions in our structurally racist society, benefit from what Johnson (2006: 22) refers to as the “luxury of obliviousness.” This luxury is only afforded to those members of society who control the vast majority of resources and other sources of power. For instance, white people control government, business, banking, education, law enforcement, media, and even our nation’s “favorite pastime,” baseball. One of the luxuries whites are granted due to this socially privileged status is the ability to command the attention of others without having to grant attention to others. Johnson (2006: 22)
provides us with a quote from James Baldwin to succinctly illustrate this point; Baldwin said, “To be white in America means not having to think about it.” To be white in America means not having to think about the privileges acceded to people with white skin. It means not having to see the world through the eyes of another human being who lives in skin a shade or two darker or celebrates a culture that is non-European. In effect, white privilege in the United States perpetuates a long tradition of silencing the voices of people who are not white, including the voices of American Indian people. It follows, therefore, that when American Indians and their allies speak out against taken-for-granted aspects of the hegemonic culture, such as the pseudo-Indian representations that typify sports mascots such as Chief Wahoo, their protest often is misunderstood/ignored and summarily dismissed. In this way, white members of a white supremacist culture choose to remain oblivious to their own role in reproducing racial inequalities.

*Prejudice and Discrimination*

White supremacy and white privilege provide a conceptual framework for understanding the circumstances that produced both pseudo-Indian mascots and the antagonism faced by American Indians who claim that these mascots are problematic. Also essential to this discussion is the literature concerning discrimination in the social institutions of the United States. Discrimination can be defined as the “actions or practices carried out by members of dominant groups, or their representatives, which have a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups” (Feagin and Feagin 1978: 20-21). Previously, discriminatory actions were believed to result from
affective prejudices, or “irrational and negative attitude[s] directed at an outgroup because of real or alleged physical or cultural characteristics” (Feagin and Feagin 1978: 20). Such prejudices inevitably transpire in white supremacist societies, which effectively discount the cultural practices and viewpoints of people of color. Prior to the 1960’s, individual acts of discrimination, behaviors attributed to prejudiced persons, were seen as the cause for unequal treatment of certain outgroups in American society. This view of racism is referred to by different names, such as “old-fashioned racism” (Sears 1988) or “open bigotry” (McConahay 1982). According to this framework for understanding inequalities in society, individual actors are responsible for the unequal treatment and disadvantaged positions of racialized groups in the United States. This view prompted an optimistic view of the future because researchers felt a fundamentally free and just society would develop as racialized populations assimilated into the mainstream and mainstream individuals unlearned outdated prejudices (Feagin and Feagin 1978).

When discrimination persisted in the United States despite a seeming decline in Americans’ prejudiced attitudes, social researchers began to incorporate social and organizational environments into a new paradigm for understanding discriminatory practices and effects. Like Mills (2003: 36), who suggests that white supremacy in the United States simply “has changed from a de jure to de facto form,” social analysts working in this area developed the modern institutional perspective, “which accents the routine, continual character of discrimination” (Feagin and Feagin 1978: 22). As Feagin and Feagin (1978: 23) state, “The critical emphasis in the institutionalized discrimination
approach is on the social patterning of discriminatory actions, especially their ‘imbeddedness’ in large-scale bureaucratic organizations.” This approach emphasizes the normalization of social ideologies that permit discriminatory practices. Institutionalized discrimination persists due to individuals’ internalization of and conformity to norms that privilege one group over another.

Thus, discriminatory actions directed towards a minority group can be unintentional. For instance, socially prescribed norms may appear to be neutral, but in reality reflect and perpetuate intentionally discriminatory practices of the past. The saturation of United States public space with myriads of superficial American Indian references makes the socially prescribed norm of pseudo-Indian mascots seem neutral. However, this cultural norm actually perpetuates discriminatory actions towards American Indians that originated in the United States’ colonial past. The presence of pseudo-Indian mascots in contemporary society, therefore, is illustrative of what Feagin and Feagin (1978: 32) refer to as “past-in-present indirect institutionalized discrimination.” In the following section, I return to the literature on pseudo-Indian mascots; a more detailed look at this literature is essential to understand the continuing influence of historical representations of American Indians on contemporary perceptions of this racialized group. First, however, a more general discussion of stereotypes is necessary.
Stereotypes

As Carby (1987) notes, stereotypes are not meant “to reflect or represent a reality but to function as a disguise, or mystification, of social reality” (Carby quoted in Collins 2000: 69). Thus, stereotypes can be defined as highly oversimplified, exaggerated depictions of certain groups (Lippman 1922; Charon 2001). These depictions accent the cognitive, emotional, and evaluative aspects of prejudicial attitudes, or “uncritical beliefs about the hated outgroup” (Feagin and Feagin 1976: 6). As Trimble (1988: 188) asserts, negative and stereotypical imagery “keeps groups apart and prevents them from learning about and appreciating the value of diversity in a pluralistic society.” In a white supremacist society such as the United States, racial stereotypes are used to dichotomize the population into two groups: whites and deviant/stigmatized “Others.” Collins (2000: 69) refers to these stereotypical categorizations as “controlling images” because they are part of a “generalized ideology of domination” in which ideas about subordinated groups are manipulated by the dominant group. This manipulation enables the dominant group to objectify “Others” through a labeling process that overshadows the individual attributes or accomplishments of members of the subordinate group (Schur 1984). As Schur (1984: 34) notes, objectification “implies denial of personal autonomy,” thereby eliminating the possibility of self-definition. In the following paragraphs, I elucidate the ways in which American Indians have been relegated to the category of “Other” and denied the power of self-definition through the use of controlling imagery. Although this controlling imagery abounds in numerous aspects of United States culture, including but
not limited to books, movies, product advertisements, and educational materials, the focus of my research is controlling images in the form of pseudo-Indian mascots.

*American Indian stereotypes:* Berkhofer (1979: xv) maintains that “the essence of the white image of the Indian has been the definition of American Indians in fact and in fancy as a separate and single other.” Historical portrayals of American Indians tend to fall into two basic categories – the image of the bad, bloodthirsty, and/or primitive savage and the image of the good, noble, and/or simple savage (Trimble 1988). Hanson and Rouse (1987) illustrate how European American colonists constructed the former category of American Indian stereotypes to justify harsh and inhumane treatments of this racialized group. During the era of European American Westward expansion, American Indians were depicted as bloodthirsty savages or heathens in popular culture to moralize their genocide and forced removal. Once the “Indian problem” had been eliminated, a different image, that of the “noble savage” (King et. al. 2002) began to emerge. A discussion of stereotypes of Black womanhood, offered by hooks (1981), helps to explain this new and seemingly more positive depiction of American Indians. She asserts that whites go to “great lengths” to create tolerable images of a subordinated group that embody “solely those characteristics they as colonizers [wish] to exploit” (hooks 1981: 84). Thus, whether Indians were portrayed by white Americans as “pristine environmentalists” or “bloodthirsty savages” depended upon which use the portrayer wanted to put the image (Hanson and Rouse 1987: 36).

It is easy to see how pseudo-Indian mascots used in contemporary sports culture are directly descended from the historical stereotypes explicated above. Davis (1993:
12) asserts that these mascots depict American Indians as “wild, aggressive, violent, brave, stoic, and as having a fighting spirit, traits commonly valued in athletics.” Once again, false representations of American Indians are exploited by white Americans who have the power to define this racially subordinated group. The definitions they have chosen draw parallels between American Indians and the non-human entities used as sports mascots (such as bears, tigers, wolverines, etc.) and consequentially, relegate members of this group to an inferior and dehumanized status.

*Racial myths and white racism:* Feagin and Vera’s (1995: 7) discussion of “white racism” within a framework of ritualized behaviors helps to clarify how these distorted images of America’s Indigenous populations perpetuate the discriminatory treatment of contemporary American Indians. According to this paradigm, the dominant members of a culturally and structurally racist society are permeated by “sincere fictions,” or racial myths that prohibit feelings of empathy for outgroup members (Feagin and Vera 1995: 14). Racial myths, “which take the form of prejudices, stereotypes, everyday racial fictions, and broader ideologies,” are the core components of racist rites, or social practices that incorporate a multitude of familiar symbols to “broadcast to the entire community the racial mythologies held by many in the dominant white group” (Feagin and Vera 1995: 10). Most importantly, racial myths are ingrained so deeply within the mental structures of dominant social participants that these myths become filters through which experiences are both seen/unseen and (mis)understood. Stereotypical portrayals of American Indians in the form of pseudo-Indian mascots have become ritualized within
The “mascotting” of American Indians: Understanding the “white racism” that has infiltrated America’s favorite pastime elucidates the problems faced by claim-makers who insist that pseudo-Indian mascots should be abolished. Farnell (2004: 31) maintains that American Indians occupy a unique position, or “different semiotic space,” than other United States minority groups due to American resistance to reconfiguring Native identity along nonracializing lines. Through the “mascotting” of Native America, the exploitative colonial processes of the past continue to operate in the present (Black 2002). European Americans’ strict adherence to cultural myths, such as the stereotypic “bloodthirsty savage” used in popular sports culture, continues to marginalize Native populations by erasing and rewriting their histories of colonization. As Deloria (1969: 9) once noted, “To be an Indian is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical.” Thus, modern discrimination against American Indians, in the form of pseudo-Indian mascots, differs “only in chronology and context from the exploits of the Indian Removal Act and various American devices used to control the continent’s Native populations” (Black 2002: 5).

The contested Chief Wahoo, a “red-faced, hook-nosed, grinning buffoon” that is proudly displayed by “Indians” fans in Northeast Ohio and across the country (Committee publication 2003), does not portray American Indians as pristine environmentalists or bloodthirsty savages. Opponents of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery assert, however, that Chief Wahoo is not a
“cute” or “inoffensive” caricature; rather, the Chief Wahoo logo “treats an entire group of people as an inane cartoon” (Committee publication 2003). Even Cleveland baseball writer Terry Pluto (1994) states that Chief Wahoo “looks as if he sold his soul for a six-pack, reinforcing all the old stereotypes” (Pluto quoted in Staurowski 2001: 100). Trimble (1988) agrees that cartoon depictions of American Indian peoples are not neutral and/or harmless representations. He states that “the Indian of the cartoonist’s pen is a caricature of one or more of the commonly held stereotypes of Indians. The emphasis is on artifacts, rather than on contemporary human beings” (Trimble 1988: 193). As noted above, a growing number of contemporary scholars agree with his assertion that all Indian mascots concretize a negative and stereotypical image of America’s Indigenous populations in popular consciousness (Black 2002; King et. al. 2002; Farnell 2004; Springwood 2004; Staurowsky 2004; Strong 2004).

Cleveland’s ritualized use of the Chief Wahoo mascot and the “Indians” moniker constructs “White public space – an arena in which the discursive practices of Whites is rendered invisible and normal” (Farnell 2004: 50). In Cleveland, the abundance of Chief Wahoo imagery has normalized the stereotypical and demeaning character of the logo. The “white public space” constructed in Cleveland because of this imagery results in American Indian invisibility, thereby, silencing American Indian concerns about the mascot (Staurowsky 2000).
Cultural Citizenship

Strong (2004: 80) agrees that this silencing of American Indian concerns is due to the “mascot slot” allocated to America’s Indigenous people, which prohibits this population from participating as full citizens in American democracy. The nature of pseudo-Indian mascots designates American Indians to an allegorical form of “cultural citizenship” because it provides American Indians with an unequal space of belonging within United States social, political, and cultural institutions. As I have noted, Swidler (1986: 275) defines culture as “a style or a set of skills and habits.” These habits produce “categories of belonging” that are reproduced in “cultural performance” and “everyday … activities of inclusion and exclusion” (Ong quoted in Strong 2004: 83). Pseudo-Indian mascots, therefore, permit members of the dominant society to easily dismiss and invalidate claims made by American Indians because of the ways in which these mascots deny America’s Indigenous residents full participatory citizenship. They strategically remove American Indians from the contemporary cultural realm by consistently portraying them as relics of the past.

As Bordewich (1996:17) has noted, “it is almost as if a culture that is literally saturated with allusions to fictional Indians [has] no interest in living Indians at all.” Despite the fact that American Indians living in Cleveland have protested the baseball franchise’s use of Chief Wahoo for several decades, the majority of Cleveland residents insist that the mascot is harmless. People like Bob DiBiasio, Cleveland Indians vice president of public relations, adamantly claim that the “Chief” is a fun-loving convention that makes people “think baseball” (Diemer 2001: 2B). DiBiasio has stated that the
caricature of Chief Wahoo is not meant to represent any group of human beings (Diemer 2001). This refutation provides us with an example of how American Indians’ claims are thoughtlessly dismissed by members of the dominant culture. Given Wahoo’s title of “Chief” and his iconographic representation of “The Tribe,” DiBiasio’s statement also illustrates the persistent denial of American Indian existence in the United States. This invisibility of American Indian people and cultures inevitably complicates the claims-making and framing activities of people who oppose the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian mascots. For this reason, a more thorough investigation of the claims-making strategies utilized by actors within the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere as they debate the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots is a critical endeavor.

PURPOSES AND BENEFITS OF THIS RESEARCH

Social scientific research on pseudo-Indian mascots has proliferated in recent years. Regardless of the discipline within which these studies are situated, many of them needlessly are confined to the sociology of sport literature due to the obvious association that exists between athletic team mascots and this particular substantive area. I do not believe that this unnecessary confinement is due to a lack of a broader perspective inherent in pseudo-Indian mascot research. Rather, it seems as though popular academic sentiment has relegated this issue to the limited domain of “sport.” In reviewing the literature, it is obvious that the authors of these studies painfully are aware of the cultural impact of the social institution of sport and the debilitating social inequities reproduced
by the institutionalization of stereotypical representations of American Indians within this realm.

Like other academics engaged in this area of study, I have designed my own research project with the goal of bringing new meaning, relevance, and theoretical insight to the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots. First, my study is situated within the contextual constructionist approach outlined by Best (2003). As I have noted, this research is a study of the claims-making/framing activities of Northeast Ohio residents as they debate the appropriateness of pseudo-Indian mascots. I seek to understand how these mascots are defined by social actors within this specific socio-cultural sphere. As the literature denotes, members of a culture create meaning through their utilization of various tools within their cultural “tool kits” (Swidler 1986). I am interested in how existing cultural traditions, ideologies, and “common sense” assumptions are used by Cleveland residents as they frame the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots. By discovering the universe of frames present in the Cleveland environment, including both the hegemonic meanings as well as the transformative ideologies applied to pseudo-Indian imagery, I hope to contribute to both the literature on framing processes as well as inequalities literatures.

Second, my study is situated within the inequalities literature, specifically as it relates to discriminatory practices affecting American Indians in contemporary United States society. The social institution of sport is ever-expanding, and therefore, continues to exert its influence into other institutions within our social sphere. For this reason, I, like others before me, am trying to push pseudo-Indian mascot research beyond the realm of sport and into the broader sociological discourse that analyzes egregious racial
inequalities of place. These inequalities have their roots in historical, colonial relationships that continue to produce ill effects and damaging outcomes for subordinated racial groups. As hooks (1994: 6) states, “Politically, we do not live in a postcolonial world, because the mindset of neo-colonialism shapes the underlying metaphysics of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.” My primary research objective is to disclose and explicate the many frames of meaning that surround the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland environment. It is my hope, however, that this research also illuminates how the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery perpetuates and reproduces white supremacist, colonialist thought processes that assume the ideological and practical superiority of the dominant white group over an inferior “Other” who, in this case, is exemplified by the Indigenous population of Cleveland.

Finally, my study of pseudo-Indian mascot protest in Cleveland follows the tenets of critical feminist research, which combines “scientific investigation with education and political action” (Cancian 1996: 188). In recognizing the “transformative power of knowledge,” I hope to generate information that not only resists, but also creates “alternatives to oppression” (Cook and Fonow 1986: 24). Specifically, my research, which elucidates the universe of frames operating in the broader Cleveland socio-cultural sphere with regard to pseudo-Indian mascots, can be used to challenge the inequalities produced and perpetuated by these mascots. My content analysis of Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper articles can be used to “help would-be claims-makers plan their own campaigns” around this timely and critical issue (Best 1989: 249). As hooks (1994: 4) maintains, cultural studies of popular culture have “the power to move intellectuals both
out of the academy and into the streets where our work can be shared with a larger audience.” It is my hope that this detailed look at the frames utilized by social actors situated in Northeast Ohio magnifies these frames in Cleveland and in other contexts (such as the world of academia), thereby producing knowledge able to “decolonize [the] minds and imaginations” of members of the wider society (hooks 1994: 4). In the proceeding chapter, I continue with a descriptive outline of the methodologies utilized in this research.
CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

My research, embedded within social constructionist theory, also draws from the literature on framing processes. Social problems, such as the problem of pseudo-Indian mascots, are socially constructed in diverse environments by various groups that utilize multiple frames of meaning. To understand the multiple frames of meaning applied to the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots in Northeast Ohio, it is essential to understand the socio-cultural context within which they are embedded. As Baylor (1996) notes, the media and the public operate within the same social and cultural space and, therefore, possess the same cultural frames, or categories of meaning. Therefore, it is appropriate to look to the news media as the source of a social sphere’s cultural frames because the popular media embraces the same distinct cultural components as the general populace. Furthermore, the content analysis of written documents, such as newspaper articles, is a strategic methodology that yields reliable data because neither the message’s sender nor receiver is aware that the message’s content will be analyzed. Thus, cultural indicators can be measured unobtrusively using content analysis (Weber 1985).
CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analytic techniques offer several methodological advantages over other forms of data analysis. As noted above, these techniques are both reliable and unobtrusive. Additionally, they can be used to inform a wide variety of research interests (Weber 1985; Carley 1993; Anastasio and Costa 2004). Despite the many contributions that these analyses make to our understanding of textual human communications, however, the very nature of content analysis opens the methodology up to several procedural disadvantages. Content analysis is a strategy that enables researchers to make inferences about the messages in texts. To make these inferences, the analyst codes predetermined segments (words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or themes) of the text so that vast quantities of data are broken down into manageable categories. Content analysis is, therefore, inherently reductive. Furthermore, the content of texts may harbor nuanced meanings due to distinct cultural patterns of communication and multiple word meanings, which make content analysis difficult to automate. This fact adds to the time consuming nature of content analysis and it also adds to the possibility of human error. As the researcher attempts to attain higher levels of interpretation through the use of more qualitative forms of content analysis, the possibility of error increases. Attending to details and exercising caution when conducting content analysis, however, can help to alleviate the threat of these possible pitfalls of the methodology.
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

I now turn to the data collected and analyzed for this research project – *Plain Dealer* news articles published between 1992 and 2006 that refer to “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years” – to discover the salience of this issue to Cleveland community members as well as the universe of frames operating within the Cleveland environment. I have chosen the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* as my source because it is the principle mainstream news publication in Cleveland. The analysis of these news articles enables me to obtain a stronger grasp on the frames utilized by the Cleveland baseball franchise and other diverse actors in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. Furthermore, this analysis allows me to assess the amount of newspaper coverage devoted to frames proffered by both supporters and opponents of the baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery. Finally, analyzing the content of these articles helps to contextualize this issue within Northeast Ohio and also provides information about how the content of media messages pertaining to the pseudo-Indian mascot issue in Cleveland has changed over time. In the proceeding paragraphs, I first explain my content analysis of the original sample of *Plain Dealer* newspaper articles, outlining the variables included in this analysis and briefly explicating the analysis procedures utilized. Following this discussion, I explain the content analytic procedures utilized for the subsample.

The Original Sample

The primary data analyzed for this study, newspaper articles that refer to “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years,” are derived from the Lexis Nexis
electronic news archive. The guided news search I used to retrieve these articles highlighted “general news” as the news category and “major papers” as the news source. I searched for the term “Chief Wahoo” in the headline, lead paragraphs, and/or subject terms. Only those articles published between 1992 and 2006 from the publication title *Plain Dealer* were retrieved. This time period denotes the 15 baseball seasons through which the Committee actively protested the Cleveland baseball team’s name and mascot. This search generated 224 articles, four of which were doubles. After my elimination of these doubles, the total number of articles was reduced to 220. Following this procedure, I conducted another search, locating the term “Committee of 500 Years” within the full text of *Plain Dealer* publications between April 1992 and October 2006; this search generated 13 articles that were not obtained within the results of the first search. The addition of these thirteen articles to my analysis resulted in a total of 233 articles.

*Original Sample Variables*

*Number of “Chief Wahoo” and “Committee of 500 Years” mentions:* I coded newspaper articles containing the term “Chief Wahoo” in the headline, lead paragraphs, and/or subject terms for the number of times that “Chief Wahoo” or some variant appears in the full text of the article. Next, I coded the content of each article for any direct reference to Chief Wahoo; for this reason, the tabulation of “Chief Wahoo” mentions includes the existence of terms such as “Chief,” “Wahoo,” “anti-Wahoo,” “anti-Chief,” and “Wahoo-less.” If neither “Chief Wahoo” nor one of the variants indicated is present in the article, I coded the news article as having “no mentions.” I transformed the
continuous variable depicting mentions of the ball club’s iconic “Chief” into a categorical variable; the collapse of this variable permitted me to develop four categories of mentions: one, two or three, four to eight, and abundant. I describe news articles as having “Abundant” mentions of the icon if they contain nine or more references to “Chief Wahoo” or one of the variants previously defined.

I also coded newspaper articles containing “Committee of 500 Years” within their full text. These articles rarely include more than one direct reference to the “Committee of 500 Years”; for this reason, I coded articles referring to the “Committee of 500 Years” differently than articles referring to “Chief Wahoo.” Articles that do not include any recognition of or reference to a specific group that protests the Cleveland baseball team’s name or mascot are coded as “no mention.” Organized protests against the Cleveland team are not commented upon in these articles. I coded articles containing “Committee of 500 Years” one or more times as “by name,” because these articles directly reference the social movement organization in question. Finally, articles that do not refer to the “Committee of 500 Years” by name, but recognize that a formal group organized to protest the ball club’s mascot exists in the city of Cleveland, are coded “as protestors” for their indirect reference to the Committee.

*Baseball season and year of publication:* Newspaper articles are coded according to their time of publication. I coded each article to indicate its publication date within two distinct time periods – “baseball season” and “year of publication.” The category “baseball season” denotes whether the article was published during the months that correspond to Major League Baseball’s baseball season; articles published in April, May,
June, July, August, September, and/or October are coded “baseball season.” Articles published in January, February, March, November, and/or October are coded “off season.”

Due to my interest in discovering the effect of the Cleveland baseball team’s performance on the frequency of articles published containing “Chief Wahoo” in the headline, lead paragraphs, and/or subject terms or “Committee of 500 Years” in the full text, I collapsed the continuous variable denoting the year of publication into a three-tiered categorical variable. The Cleveland team participated in the American League play-offs every year from 1995 to 2001, with the exception of 2000. To separate this particularly successful era of Cleveland baseball from the three years preceding and the five years following, I coded newspaper articles appearing in the Plain Dealer from 1992 to 2006 according to their publication date within three time periods: 1992 – 1994, 1995 – 2001, and 2002 – 2006.

**Location:** First, I coded each article to indicate the newspaper section in which it originally was located. Articles originally appeared in 23 different Plain Dealer sections; I collapsed these sections into seven groupings to simplify data analysis. The “Metro,” “Editorial & Forum,”1 “National,” and “Religion” sections are prominent sections of the Plain Dealer newspaper; for this reason, I did not alter the numbers of articles retrieved from these newspaper-identified sections. Furthermore, I added only one article from a special newspaper pullout section named “World Series ‘97” to the newspaper-identified

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1 Although approximately two-thirds of the articles in this category appear in the “Editorial and Forum” section of the Plain Dealer, articles defined by this category also appear in the following sections: “Editorials,” “Forum,” “Forum, Opinion, and Ideas,” and “Opinion.”
“Sports” section. I recoded articles located in sections of the paper that discuss local and regional news and events, such as “Friday,” “Northeast Ohio,” “State & Region,” and “Communities” into a category named “Regional.” The “Miscellaneous” category includes any other newspaper section in which articles appear; some examples include “Arts & Life,” “Books,” “Food,” “Homes,” “Style,” and “Sunday Magazine.”

Second, I coded each news article to denote its visibility within the Plain Dealer. The physical location of a news article increases reader visibility, or the likelihood that the article will reach a large segment of the reading population. Articles presented on the front page of a newspaper or the front page of a section are more likely to be viewed by the newspaper’s audience. For this reason, I coded each article to denote its physical location in terms of whether it appeared on the front page of the Plain Dealer or whether it appeared on the front page of the section in which it is found.

Length: The LexisNexis news archive provides article length in terms of the number of words in each article, making this measurement convenient for my analysis. I coded articles with less than 200 words as news “Snippets.” Articles coded as “Short” contain between 200 and 499 words. I determined articles to be of “Average” length if they contain between 500 and 699 words. Articles with 700 to 899 words are coded as “Long.” No articles in the sample contain 900 to 999 words, so I coded articles containing 1000 words or more as “Very Long.”

Primary themes: Finally, I coded the primary themes of Plain Dealer articles mentioning “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years.” To determine the content of the news items, I initially coded each item into one of 48 content categories,
which were collapsed into eight cohesive groupings to simplify data analysis. The primary theme categories are as follows:

1. “Wahoo debate” consists of feature articles, editorials, and letters to the editor that comment directly on the mascot debate in Cleveland; the authors of these articles either argue for or against the mascot or present both sides of the debate.

2. “Mascot issue” consists of news items that are relevant to the mascot issue, but focus on one specific topic of concern. For example, seven of the articles discuss the controversy surrounding the issuance of Ohio license plates with the Chief Wahoo icon and five of the articles discuss the enforcement of a new Cleveland Public Library dress code that prohibits employees from wearing clothes depicting the Cleveland baseball team’s mascot. Other news items that are addressed by the articles in this category include a prospective banishment of Wahoo imagery on Cleveland city property, and the sponsorship and placement of anti-Wahoo billboards in the Cleveland area.

3. “Protests” consists of news items directly pertaining to the activities of persons and groups protesting the Chief Wahoo icon.

4. “Committee of 500 Years” presents information about Committee-sponsored events, such as plays, poetry readings, and conferences, and also includes references to community events when a Committee spokesperson is asked to comment on the issue at hand.

5. “Religion” consists of articles in which the mascot issue is discussed in some capacity by members of the religious community of Cleveland.
6. "Wahoo as icon" is comprised of an interesting hodge-podge of articles that provide evidence of the iconic status of the Chief Wahoo caricature. These articles do not cohere due to one dominant theme; rather, they offer a glimpse into the culture of Cleveland. These articles provide a detailed account of how the mascot is accepted as a fact of life and is utilized as an expression of commonality in the Cleveland environment. For example, the author of one of these articles comments on the fact that a bar is not authentically Irish simply because a green Chief Wahoo bedecks its walls. In these articles, the Wahoo visage also adorns body parts, clothing, house wares, Pepsi cans, and a stained glass window.

7. "Baseball" includes articles providing the avid Cleveland baseball fan with a wide range of information, including play-by-play descriptions of the previous day’s game, interviews with Indians baseball players, updates on player uniforms, and information about vendors in and around the stadium. Some of the articles in this category describe the frenzied activities of Cleveland residents and administrators as they prepare for post-season play-off games. Other articles detail the move from Municipal Stadium to Jacobs Field. Articles with the primary theme of “Baseball” typically mention “Chief Wahoo” in a non-evaluative manner. For instance, play-by-play game descriptions often note the tipping of a “Chief Wahoo” hat or fans’ displays of “Chief Wahoo” banners at the stadium. In the article entitled “Signing Off; Fans, Indians Say Farewell to Chief” (Hoynes 1/04/94), the author describes the “slow descent” of the 35 foot tall “Chief Wahoo” sign that had been a smiling “beacon for Indians’ fans” for 32 years. This sign, which was situated on top of Gate D at Municipal Stadium, is not accompanying the team.
to Jacobs Field because he is “too old and tired,” according to team owner Dick Jacobs. (Note that his dismissal is not due to the fact that he is too offensive.)

8. “Miscellaneous” clusters articles that include the term “Wahoo” or one of its variants in a fleeting capacity. Each of these news items refers to Chief Wahoo only peripherally; references to the term “Wahoo” are too brief or obscure to classify. For example, three of these news items are community death announcements and the people they describe include a man who had written commentary about Chief Wahoo for the *Plain Dealer*, a man who owned an embroidery shop famous for its Chief Wahoo etchings, and a man who once participated in Committee-sponsored protests of the Chief Wahoo image. Another news item in this category refers to the theft of a Chief Wahoo flag from a Cleveland area residence. The property value of homes in Cleveland and the murder of a man in Tennessee are also topics of discussion.

*Original Sample Analysis Procedures*

Once the coding of each article in the original sample was completed, I created a data set in which each article represented one case and into which each article’s scores on the variables listed above were entered. This process allowed me to obtain frequencies for each of these explanatory variables, which address the salience of the pseudo-Indian mascot issue to Cleveland community residents. The findings from this analysis are presented in Chapter Four.
The Subsample

To further understand the multiple frames of meaning attached to the mascot in the Cleveland environment, I extracted a subsample of articles from the original sample. Articles thematically categorized as “Wahoo debate,” “Mascot issue,” and “Religion” comprised this strategically selected subsample because these articles depicted some sense of Cleveland residents’ deliberations concerning the baseball franchise’s name and mascot. In other words, these articles were particularly illustrative of the multiple frames of meaning attached to the team’s name and mascot in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. Thus, my content analysis of the newspaper articles exhibiting these primary themes addressed the question of how the pseudo-Indian mascot issue was framed by members of the broader Cleveland community.

Prior to conducting the analysis, I recoded editorial articles presenting community “forums” on the mascot issue. These eight articles in the data set contained 35 separate and distinct opinion letters written by members of the Cleveland community. For ease of analysis and interpretation, I recoded the individual letters presented in the Plain Dealer’s “Forum, Opinion, & Ideas” sections so that each letter represented one case (rather than a collection of cases) in the data set. Thus, the total number of subset articles analyzed was 136.

---

2 Eight “Forum, Opinion, & Ideas” articles were eliminated from the sample of 109 articles for a total of 101 articles, then 35 individual letters to the editor were added to the sample of 101 articles for a total of 136 articles.
Subsample Variables

Overtone: First, I coded each article according to its overall evaluation of the team’s name and mascot. Articles presenting a news story that dealt with the mascot issue in some way, but gave a more or less impartial account were coded “Neutral.” Articles and letters to the editor with negative evaluations of the name and mascot were coded “Anti-Wahoo” and articles and letters to the editor arguing for retention of the name and mascot were coded “Pro-Wahoo.” A total of five articles (approximately 4%) expressed sentiments both in favor of eliminating the Chief Wahoo mascot and in favor of retaining the team’s “Indians” moniker. Because persons expressing this opinion believed that the mascot was inappropriate, but did not support the majority of claims regarding the detrimental consequences of pseudo-Indian imagery, I placed these five cases in the “Pro-Wahoo” category.

Themes: Second, I coded all of the words, phrases, and/or ideas portraying the team’s use of the “Indians” moniker and the Chief Wahoo mascot in either a favorable or unfavorable manner. This process resulted in sixty-two distinct codes, which I sorted into eighteen code categories. Each of the resulting categories represents a theme which helps to clarify and organize the sentiments surrounding this issue in the broader Cleveland environment. Several steps were taken to answer my second research question regarding the prevalence of each of these themes. I constructed a data set in which each of the subsample articles represented one case. Each of the emergent themes was entered into the data set as a dummy variable, with 1 corresponding to the presence of the specified theme within the subsample article and 0 corresponding to the absence of the
specified theme within the subsample article. Because I was interested in the presence of themes (rather than single arguments or claims) surrounding the mascot issue in Cleveland, most of the emergent themes contain both favorable and unfavorable sentiments regarding the Cleveland team’s use of pseudo-Indian mascot imagery. The following list presents the contradictory sentiments encapsulated by each theme underlying this debate in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere.

1. **Offensiveness**: Who should determine what is or is not offensive? Is the team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery all in good clean fun or is it tasteless and abusive?

2. **Racism**: Is the team’s use of this imagery indicative of racism in the Cleveland environment? Are the team’s symbolic images remnants of a by-gone era in which blatantly racist depictions and sentiments were normative?

3. **Imagery**: What is the meaning of the Chief Wahoo image? Who has the authority to determine the meaning of this image?

4. **Honor**: How should an act of honor be bestowed? Who has the authority to determine what is or is not honorable?

5. **Racial metaphor**: How do pseudo-Indian mascots compare to stereotypical images of other human groups?

6. **Tradition**: How important are traditions? When should they be retained or abandoned and who should make this decision?

7. **Harm**: How is “harm” determined? What harms should be prioritized and who should prioritize them?
8. **Importance:** Does the pseudo-Indian mascot issue deserve public attention? Is the debate surrounding sports mascots a waste of time when so many other social problems exist?

9. **Power:** Who is abusing power in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere – the people who insist that the Cleveland baseball franchise should continue to use pseudo-Indian imagery or individuals who assert that the team’s name and mascot should be eliminated?

10. **Numbers:** Is the number of people in support of or against the Cleveland team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery important to this debate? Is the team’s continuing usage of this imagery justified by popular support?

11. **Morality:** Are pseudo-Indian mascots a moral concern? Who is oblivious to the “real” issues underlying this debate – individuals who support retention or individuals who support removal of pseudo-Indian imagery?

12. **Ownership:** Who owns or should own pseudo-Indian imagery? Do the team’s name and mascot belong to Clevelanders or to the American Indian people they depict?

13. **Money:** When should money and profit be taken into consideration? Is it more important for the city of Cleveland to capitalize on its use of pseudo-Indian imagery or should economic issues take a back seat to human rights issues?

14. **Intent:** Is intentionality a legitimate argument? If the name and mascot never were intended to be racist and/or harmful, should their continuing usage be excused, accepted, and/or celebrated? Or is the question of intent irrelevant when the outcome is perceived as negative?
15. *Censorship:* When is censorship appropriate? Are mandates for the elimination of pseudo-Indian mascots a violation of first amendment rights?

16. *Public space:* To whom does “public space” belong? Must everyone feel “welcome” in this space or is universal accessibility enough?

17. *Religion/spirituality:* Are pseudo-Indian mascots a religious/spiritual issue? Should churches get involved in the debate surrounding this issue?

18. *Legality:* Is the use of pseudo-Indian imagery a civil rights issue?

The subsample articles contained at least one, but often several, of the themes listed above. As noted, I coded articles according to whether they contained one or more of these themes, rather than coding the number of thematic mentions in each article. Thus, my analysis was conducted at the article level.

*Subsample Analysis Procedures*

Once I coded each of the subsample articles, I entered each article’s scores on the new variables (explicated above) into the original data set. Next, I selected only those cases which represented subsample articles, or those articles from the original sample that were thematically categorized as “Wahoo debate,” “Mascot issue,” or “Religion.” Hence, I was able to conduct the original sample analysis procedures on the subsample articles and determine how comparable these two samples were in terms of pertinent article characteristics (i.e., number of “Chief Wahoo” and/or “Committee of 500 Years” mentions and time of publication) that indicated the salience of this issue to Cleveland community members. Once this analysis was completed, I obtained theme frequencies
for the subsample articles. This procedure allowed me to ascertain the prevalence of each of the eighteen themes listed above.

Finally, to determine whether differences existed in the prevalence of themes in articles that either supported or opposed the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery, I conducted a simple cross-tabulation of article “overtone” by “theme.” As noted, the variable “overtone” delineates articles according to the authors’ general evaluations of the team’s name and mascot; this categorical variable specifically denotes whether articles addressed the issue in a “Neutral,” “Anti-Wahoo,” or “Pro-Wahoo” manner. The “Neutral” articles, which comprised approximately 40 % (n=55) of articles in the subsample, were omitted from my final analysis because they were not able to provide me with the desired information. These “Neutral” articles did not allow me to assess which of the multitude of themes were referenced by articles presenting arguments either for or against retention of the baseball franchise’s team name and mascot. Thus, the number of articles included in my final analysis of the subsample was reduced from 136 to 81. The findings from each of these analyses of subsample articles are presented in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER FOUR

Issue Salience and the Universe of Frames

In the following pages, I explicate the findings from my content analysis of both original sample and subsample articles. I conducted these analyses to identify the pseudo-Indian mascot issue’s salience to Cleveland community members and to understand how the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots has been defined by social actors within the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. I begin by presenting the findings from my analysis of the original sample, Plain Dealer articles with “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years” mentions. Following this discussion, I present the findings from my analysis of the subsample articles.

DISCOVERING SALIENCE

As noted, I conducted the content analysis of original sample articles in my effort to understand the degree of salience accorded the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. In the following paragraphs, I first explain the pertinent article characteristics analyzed, including “Chief Wahoo” and “Committee of 500 Years” mentions, time of publication, article location and article length. Second, I explicate the findings from my analysis of the articles’ primary themes.
Article Characteristics

“Chief Wahoo” and “Committee of 500 Years” mentions: As noted, I analyzed Plain Dealer articles containing “Chief Wahoo” in the headlines, lead paragraphs, and/or subject terms or “Committee of 500 Years” in the full text. Of the articles in my data set (N=233), 97% (n=226) contain “Chief Wahoo” mentions and 36% (n=83) contain “Committee of 500 Years” mentions. I indicate the salience of each of these search terms in Table 5.1, which denotes the total number of mentions per article for each term.

The first panel of Table 5.1 indicates that approximately one-third of the articles (38%, n=85) refer to “Chief Wahoo” or one of the previously described variants of this term only once and one-quarter (25%, n=58) of these articles directly reference “Chief Wahoo” two or three times. Approximately 24% (n=54) of the articles with mentions contain four to eight direct references to “Chief Wahoo” and approximately 13% (n=29) of these articles contain “abundant” references, defined as 9 or more “Wahoo” terms, to the iconic “Chief.”

Although 97% (n=226) of articles in the sample mention “Chief Wahoo,” only 36% (n=83) of these articles mention the “Committee of 500 Years.” I have depicted these mentions in the second panel of Table 5.1. The imbalance between “Chief Wahoo” and “Committee of 500 Years” mentions suggests that the Committee is not nearly as prominent in the Cleveland environment as the Cleveland baseball franchise’s mascot, which undoubtedly complicates the claims-making activities of those opposed to pseudo-Indian mascots. Articles that mention the “Committee of 500 Years” by name comprise approximately one-quarter (28%, n=23) of articles with Committee mentions. Because I
hoped conducting this analysis would help me to ascertain the amount of media attention granted the Committee, this finding is critical; the fact that only 28% of Plain Dealer articles recognizing some protest group refer to the Committee by name is striking. More articles, approximately 72% of those with mentions, do note the existence of protestors organized in response to the team’s name and/or mascot; however, this limited visibility of the Committee’s protest, specifically, may be detrimental to an organization committed to eliminating the ubiquitous mascot. These findings suggest that the Committee either has not promoted its resistance to the mascot effectively or that the Committee has faced rigorous opposition to its claims within the Cleveland environment. The media’s ability to filter information available to Cleveland residents makes it difficult to assess which of these propositions is more truthful; however, further analysis of Plain Dealer articles referencing either the mascot or the Committee will be helpful in trying to resolve the media’s role. More detailed analysis of these articles will be explicated at a later point; for now, it is important to note that of the 233 articles in the total sample, 64% (n=150) do not even allude to the fact that the “Chief Wahoo” mascot is a subject of organized protest. Only 10% (n=23) of articles in the total sample mention the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance by name. Because Table 5.1 denotes the number of “Committee of 500 Years” mentions per article, the articles with no mention are not depicted in the table.

*Time of publication:* In Table 5.2, I illustrate the frequencies and averages of Plain Dealer articles by baseball season and year of publication. As depicted in the first panel of Table 5.2, approximately two-thirds (65%, n=152) of the articles appear in the
*Plain Dealer* during the Major League Baseball season, i.e., April through October, while a little more than one-third (35%, n=81) appear during the off season. Baseball season occupies seven months, or slightly more than half of one year; therefore, I have depicted the average number of articles published per month per season to assess the relevancy of “Chief Wahoo” and the “Committee of 500 Years” within these distinct time periods. As shown in Table 5.2, articles appear in the *Plain Dealer* during baseball season more often than they appear during the off season. This finding, of course, is in line with what one might expect, since the team is more likely to be addressed in the news while it is playing games. The fact that mentions of “Chief Wahoo” and the “Committee of 500 Years” predominantly occur during the Major League Baseball season also suggests, however, that the mascot issue is deemed to be of less importance when Cleveland’s ball team is between seasons. Furthermore, these findings indicate that within Cleveland, the controversy surrounding the mascot is more of a seasonal issue than a social issue. For opponents of the baseball franchise’s name and mascot to achieve their goals, they will have to demonstrate that the existence of pseudo-Indian imagery is a social issue that deserves year-round attention.

Table 5.2 also shows the distribution of news articles published in the *Plain Dealer* during three time periods: 1992 – 1994, 1995 – 2001, and 2002 – 2006. As I noted previously, the middle period, 1995 – 2001, corresponds to the Cleveland baseball franchise’s most successful baseball seasons. As expected, nearly two-thirds (64%,
Table 5.1: Number of “Wahoo,” “Committee of 500 Years” Mentions in *Plain Dealer* Articles from 1992 – 2006 (n=233 articles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of ‘Wahoo’ mentions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – Three</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four – Eight</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL # of MENTIONS</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of ‘Committee of 500 Years’ Mentions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By name</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As ‘protestors’</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL # of MENTIONS</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Frequencies and Averages of *Plain Dealer* Articles by Baseball Season and Year of Publication (n=233)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseball Season*</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball season</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>65 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off season</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>35 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Mean per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992 – 1994</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 – 2001</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 2006</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The months of the “baseball season” include April, May, June, July, August, September, and October. Off season months include January, February, March, November, and December.*
of the articles were published during this middle period, denoting the increased saliency of the mascot and the Committee during the team’s winning streak. Nevertheless, a finding that is most astounding can be seen in the last column which indicates the mean number of articles published per year for each of the three time periods. Between 1995 and 2001, when the Cleveland ball club placed either first or second in the American League, a mean of 21 articles was published per year. Surprisingly, this figure is not much greater than the yearly average for articles published during the period preceding the team’s triumphant seasons; between 1992 and 1994, articles were published at the unexpectedly high rate of 17 per year. In direct contrast, a total of only 34 articles were published between 2002 and 2006, comprising only 15% of articles in the total sample. The yearly mean of only 7 articles shows a dramatic decrease in the number of articles containing “Chief Wahoo” in the headline, lead paragraphs, and/or subject terms and/or mentions of the “Committee of 500 Years” during this time period.

This finding may indicate a number of things, not the least of which is the fact that the Plain Dealer purposively may have limited its direct references to the controversial mascot by replacing the term “Chief Wahoo” with any other terms available to signify the Cleveland baseball team. However, it may also suggest that the team’s mascot has become a non-issue in recent years, a situation that undoubtedly will have a profound impact on the effectiveness of counter-hegemonic frames utilized by opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots. For instance, if community discussion of the mascot’s appropriateness has diminished to the extent that this analysis suggests, then opponents of
the baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery will have an increasingly difficult
time drawing attention to themselves and their messages. The ubiquity of the mascot
compounded by the lack of discussion surrounding the mascot controversy may create an
environment that is altogether ambivalent to depictions of the mascot as an offensive
representation of American Indians. Further analyses of articles alluding to the mascot
and the Committee are necessary to determine which of these possibilities most
adequately describes the situation at hand.

Location and length: In Table 5.3, I indicate the location and length of Plain
Dealer articles that contain “Chief Wahoo” and/or “Committee of 500 Years” mentions.
The first panel of Table 5.3 describes the location of each article in terms of the section in
which the article appears. More than one-quarter (27%, n=63) of the articles are located
in the Plain Dealer’s “Metro” section; this finding suggests that the mascot and issues
pertaining to the mascot are portrayed, more often than not, as products of the Cleveland
environment. They most frequently are placed within the section of the newspaper
devoted to Cleveland affairs. In other words, these topics are depicted as being most
relevant to residents of Cleveland and therefore, seem to be municipal, rather than
national, concerns. This finding once again suggests that the mascot controversy is not
deemed to be a social issue, particularly one that affects societal members beyond those
living within the vicinity of Cleveland.

Despite the high frequency of articles appearing in the “Metro” section, articles
also appear in the “Editorial & Forum,” “Sports,” and “National” sections at relatively
Table 5.3: Location and Length of *Plain Dealer* Articles that Contain “Chief Wahoo” or “Committee of 500 Years” Mentions from 1992 – 2006 (n=233)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newspaper Section</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Front page of newspaper</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front page</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>94 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Front page of section</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front page</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snippet</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>31 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>34 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very long</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
high rates. As the percentages reveal, articles that refer to Chief Wahoo and/or the Committee are dispersed throughout the *Plain Dealer*. Although the “Metro” section is where the largest number of articles is found, nearly three-quarters of these articles would not be seen by someone who reads the “Metro” section alone.

It also is crucial to note that approximately one-fifth of these articles are located in the “Editorial and Forum” section of the newspaper. This finding suggests that Cleveland-area residents, in one way or another, have delineated the mascot issue as being of some concern. Most surprising, however, is the fact that the “Sports” section accounts for only 16% (n=37) of articles with mentions; it seems as though the average Cleveland sports fan may not even be aware of the debate surrounding the baseball franchise’s mascot if they are not reading the paper beyond the “Sports” section. This finding may denote a problem that must be addressed if the mascot is ever to be changed; sports fans, for whom the mascot is most significant, must be made aware of negative definitions of pseudo-Indian imagery before they can draw their own conclusions about the appropriateness of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s name and mascot.

The middle panels of Table 5.3 draw attention to each article’s visibility. As I have noted, visibility is determined by whether the article is displayed on the front page of the newspaper or the front page of the section in which it is located, since these locations increase the likelihood that the article will reach a large segment of the reading population. Of the 233 articles in my sample, only 6% (n=15) appear on the front page of the *Plain Dealer*. However, 30% (n=70) of the articles appear on the front page of the section in which they are located, indicating that these articles were somewhat more
likely to be viewed by the newspaper’s audience. Interestingly, a cross-tabulation shows that articles are more likely to appear on the front page of the “Metro” (n=29), “Sports” (n=16), and “National” (n=15) sections; in fact, a full 86% (60/70=.86) of articles that appear on the front page of any section are located here.

In the final panel of Table 5.3, article length is indicated. “Snippets,” or brief articles that contain 200 words or less, comprise 15% (n=34) of the articles in my sample. Approximately two-thirds of the articles are “Short” (200 – 499 words) or “Average” (500 – 699 words) in length. This finding suggests that Plain Dealer articles referring to “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years” do not take up a lot of the newspaper’s space, perhaps indicating their lack of true significance to residents of Cleveland, at least according to the publishers of the Plain Dealer. Approximately 12% (n=29) of the articles in the sample are “Long,” meaning that they contain between 700 and 899 words, and approximately 9% (n=21) of these articles are “Very Long,” or contain 1000 words or more. It is important to note that of the “Very Long” articles, however, nearly one-quarter of them (5 of 21) mention either Chief Wahoo or the Committee only briefly within a broader context. For instance, an article entitled “Images of 1993,” published in December of that year, provides readers with a recap of globally, nationally, and locally significant events that occurred throughout the year. Under the month of June, one sentence states, “The Indians end months of speculation by deciding to keep the team name and grinning, red-faced Chief Wahoo logo, despite

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3 In the initial coding, I used a dummy variable to denote whether each article focuses on one specific item or contains a list of items drawn together under one general sphere of interest, such as “community events.” The overwhelming majority of articles (90%, n=211) in the data set focus on one specific item; for this reason, the variable was deemed to be of little significance and is not noted elsewhere in the paper.
protests by American Indian groups” (*Plain Dealer*, Year in Review, 31 December 1993). Two of these “Very Long” articles contain listings of local events and the Committee’s name appears because they sponsored a play confronting racism (*Plain Dealer*, Communities, 5 April 1995) and a community potluck (*Plain Dealer*, Friday, 5 May 1995). In other words, my classification of articles as “Long” and/or “Very Long” denotes article length, but does not necessarily provide a great deal of information about the amount of the article’s content which depicts the mascot or the Committee.

**Primary Themes**

Table 5.4 denotes the presence and prevalence of primary themes of *Plain Dealer* articles mentioning “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years.” Articles focusing on the “Wahoo debate” were published at a slightly higher frequency than articles depicting any of the other primary themes; these articles comprise approximately 28% (n=66) of the data set. Because the city of Cleveland is inundated with images of the ball club’s iconic “Chief,” this finding was not expected; rather, I expected the majority of newspaper mentions of “Chief Wahoo” to be located in articles specifically addressing baseball. Of course, articles within the “Wahoo debate” theme may articulate a broad range of claims, both supportive and critical of the mascot. Further analyses of these articles will be necessary to determine both how each side of the debate is presented and which side of the debate is presented more often. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these articles address the mascot debate in some manner, and in doing so, they draw attention to the issue regardless of the frames presented.
Table 5.4: Presence and Prevalence of Primary Themes in *Plain Dealer* Articles Mentioning “Chief Wahoo,” “Committee of 500 Years” (n=233)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wahoo debate</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mascot issue</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protests</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahoo as icon</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee of 500 Years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>233</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Articles focusing on “Baseball,” less surprisingly, were published at the next highest frequency; this theme is dominant in approximately 25% (n=59) of the articles. Over half of the articles, then, exhibit either the “Wahoo debate” or “Baseball” themes, the two primary themes which seem the most oppositional. This finding is interesting because it indicates that approximately half of the mascot coverage in the *Plain Dealer* is equally distributed between articles that address the mascot as a concern and articles that uncritically refer to the mascot as a symbol of team spirit.

The two themes which occur at the next highest frequencies are “Mascot issue” and “Protests.” Articles exhibiting the “Mascot issue” theme comprise approximately 11% (n=25) of articles in the data set and those exhibiting the theme of “Protests” comprise approximately 10% (n=24) of these articles. Articles with the “Mascot issue”
theme refer to one specific concern about the mascot’s usage in the Cleveland environment. For instance, several of these articles deal with the dress code of library workers employed by the city. Within the “Protest” category, half of the articles announce protest events and the other half describe protestor arrests and the court hearings following these arrests. Once again, the fact that these primary themes, both of which attend to some aspect of civic turmoil due to the Cleveland baseball franchise’s mascot, are present in more than one-fifth of the articles in the data set is remarkable.

The remaining themes, “Wahoo as icon,” “Religion,” “Committee of 500 Years,” and “Miscellaneous,” each occur less frequently. As I noted previously, the thematic category “Wahoo as icon” does not include articles that cohere due to one prevalent theme, but rather because the mascot is presented in these articles as a fact of Cleveland life or an expression of commonality in the Cleveland environment. The primary theme of “Wahoo as icon” accounts for 8% (n=19) of the articles in the sample. This finding is not particularly exceptional; in fact, I expected to find articles fitting the “Wahoo as icon” criteria to be more prevalent in Cleveland’s foremost newspaper. After all, everyone in Cleveland at least is familiar with “Chief Wahoo,” whether they find the mascot to be distasteful or not. I expected the iconic “Chief” to be referred to passively in Plain Dealer articles more often than is the case.

The frequency of articles with the primary theme of “Religion,” on the other hand, is quite notable. Articles thematically categorized as pertaining to “Religion” comprise approximately 8% (n=18) of the articles in the sample. This finding was
unexpected; prior to my analysis, I was unaware of the salience of the mascot issue to members of Cleveland’s religious community.

The low frequency of articles noted for their explicit focus on the “Committee of 500 Years” suggests that the Committee is not particularly relevant to Cleveland residents. Only 6% (n=14) of the articles focus on the Committee, its ideas, and/or its activities, excluding the Committee’s protest events or the arrests or court hearings of Committee members, which are subsumed within the thematic category labeled “Protests.”

**Summary of Findings from the Content Analysis of Original Sample Articles**

At the conclusion of my initial phase of investigation of *Plain Dealer* articles referencing “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee of 500 Years,” some notable findings emerged. For instance, the limited visibility of the Committee of 500 Years within the Cleveland environment is a telling phenomenon. Only 10% (n=23) of the articles analyzed refer to this social movement organization by name. Although one-quarter of the articles (n=60) acknowledge the presence of some group organized to protest the Cleveland baseball team’s mascot, the fact that the Committee is not recognized by name denotes the unfamiliarity of Cleveland residents with both the Indigenous community of Cleveland and the mascot issue more generally. Despite the lack of explicit references to the Committee, articles thematically categorized as “Wahoo debate” (28%, n=66), “Mascot issue” (11%, n=25), and “Religion” (8%, n=18), all of which depict some sense of Cleveland residents’ deliberations concerning the baseball franchise’s name and
mascot, astoundingly consist of just under half (47%, n=109) of the articles with “Chief Wahoo” and/or “Committee of 500 Years” mentions published in the Plain Dealer between 1992 and 2006. This finding suggests that the mascot was at least an issue, and therefore, was not accepted uncritically by all members of the Cleveland community.

These findings prompt a number of questions. For instance, why is the Committee, an SMO devoted to the elimination of pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere, often overlooked by Cleveland residents debating the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots? More importantly, does this lack of recognition of the Committee as an organization correspond with a lack of recognition of the frames utilized by the Committee and other opponents of the baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery as they engage in “meaning work” in this environment? As noted, a number of socio-cultural constraints adversely may affect the reception of counter-hegemonic frames, or transformative ideologies, by members of a socio-cultural sphere. To understand these constraints and their impact on the “meaning work” with which opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots have been engaged in this socio-cultural sphere, I needed to more fully disclose the universe of frames present in the Cleveland environment. Specifically, it was necessary for me to understand how the issue of the mascot was framed by members of the wider Cleveland community. To do so, I further analyzed articles expounding upon the multiple frames of meaning attached to the mascot issue in the Northeast Ohio region.
DISCOVERING THE UNIVERSE OF FRAMES PRESENT IN CLEVELAND

My content analysis of the subsample of Plain Dealer newspaper articles was conducted to address three specific research questions: 1) how do the subsample articles, which discuss pseudo-Indian mascots as a public issue, compare to the original sample of articles with regard to pertinent article characteristics; 2) what themes help to define the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere and how prevalent are each of these themes; and finally, 3) do differences exist regarding the prevalence of themes in articles that support or oppose the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery? The answers to these research questions are necessary to understand the frames, or cognitive schemas, upon which residents of Northeast Ohio rely to make sense of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of the “Indians” moniker and the Chief Wahoo mascot. Thus, the purpose of this analysis of subsample articles ultimately was to discover the universe of themes operating in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. I wanted to understand how the diverse entities operating within the Cleveland environment drew upon their cultural stocks of knowledge, or their cultural “tool kits,” to “make meaning” of the mascot debate. Specifically, I wished to identify the “cultural packages” available to Cleveland residents as they made claims that supported or opposed the team’s name and mascot. As noted, my research questions were addressed through further analysis of original sample articles categorized as “Wahoo debate,” “Mascot issue,” and “Religion.”

In the following paragraphs, I present the notable findings from my analysis of subsample articles. The second half of this chapter is organized according to the research
questions addressed above. Thus, I first compare the pertinent article characteristics of original and subsample articles. This discussion is followed by an explication of the presence and prevalence of themes existing in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere with regard to the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots. Finally, I look at the different themes that are addressed in articles that support or oppose the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery.

*Comparison of Original Sample and Subsample Articles*

To understand how the subsample articles, which discuss pseudo-Indian mascots as a *public issue*, compare to the original sample of articles with regard to pertinent article characteristics, I conducted (nearly) the same analysis on the subsample as I did with the original sample. I specifically was interested in knowing how the subsample articles compared to original sample articles with regard to the number of “Chief Wahoo” and/or “Committee of 500 Years” mentions and the time of publication. These characteristics, unlike article location and length, were not altered considerably by my recoding of *Plain Dealer* “Forum, Opinion, and Ideas” articles. As expected, the subsample articles were not exceptionally dissimilar to the original sample articles in terms of the specified mentions and publication times. My findings are explicated in fuller detail below.

The number of “Wahoo” mentions in these articles increased by three to five percentage points for every category of mentions (i.e., two or three mentions, four to eight mentions, and abundant, or more than nine mentions), excluding the category
denoting only one “Wahoo” mention, which decreased dramatically. Whereas 38 % of articles in the original sample contained only one “Wahoo” mention, only 23 % of articles in the subsample contained one “Wahoo” mention. The subsample articles were selected because they explicitly discussed the Cleveland baseball franchise’s name and/or mascot as a public issue or a social problem, and thus, it seems natural that these articles would contain more plentiful “Wahoo” mentions. Furthermore, the percentage of subsample articles referring to a local group of “protestors” who opposed the team’s name and mascot also increased from 72 % to 82 % of articles with some mention of organized objection to the ball club’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery. At the same time, however, the percentage of subsample articles referring to the “Committee of 500 Years” by name actually decreased from 28 % to 18 % of articles with mentions. Although I expected the Committee’s name to appear more often in Plain Dealer articles addressing the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots, this finding further elucidates the lack of recognition granted the Committee as a social movement organization in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere.

The frequencies and averages of subsample articles by Baseball Season and Year of Publication also follow patterns similar to those exhibited in the original sample. Subsample articles appeared in the Plain Dealer during baseball season more often than they appeared during the off season. In fact, the percentage of subsample articles published during the baseball season increased to 77 % (compared to 65 % of original sample articles published between April and October) and the percentage of subsample articles published during the off season decreased to 24 % (compared to 35 % of original
sample articles published in January, February, March, November, and/or December). It is important to note that the eight “Forum, Opinion, & Ideas” articles that were parsed into 35 different cases for the subsample analysis all appeared in the *Plain Dealer* during the months of the baseball season, inevitably contributing to the increased percentage of subsample articles published at this time. Thus, the mean number of subsample articles published each month during the baseball season declined only slightly, from a mean of 1.4 articles per month in the original sample to a mean of one article per month in the subsample, which can be explained by the fact that the subsample contained far less articles (n=136) than the original sample (n=233). The mean number of subsample articles published each month during the off season declined considerably. A mean of 1.2 original sample articles per month appeared during the off season, while subsample articles appeared in the *Plain Dealer* only once every two months during the off season\(^4\). Once again, this discrepancy can be attributed partially to the difference in the total number of articles in each sample. However, the fact that an article explicitly focused on the Cleveland team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery appeared only every other month of the off season is telling. The infrequency of articles discussing the team’s name and mascot as a public issue during these months undoubtedly makes it more difficult for opponents of the team’s name and mascot to convince Cleveland residents that the team’s use of stereotypical imagery is a year-round concern for American Indian people.

Year of publication frequencies for the subsample also follow trends similar to those reported for the original sample. I looked at the distribution of news articles

\(^4\) The monthly mean for subsample articles published during the off season was .5.
published in the *Plain Dealer* during three time periods: 1992 – 1994, 1995 – 2001, and 2002 – 2006, with the middle period corresponding to the Cleveland team’s most successful baseball seasons. As expected, the yearly mean of articles published increased by four for both the original sample and the subsample between the 1992 – 1994 and 1995 – 2001 time periods. Likewise, the yearly mean of articles published during the 2002 – 2006 time period decreased dramatically for both samples. Approximately seven original sample articles fitting my search criteria (i.e., “Chief Wahoo” in the headlines, lead paragraphs, and/or search terms and/or “Committee of 500 Years” in the full text) were published per year and only one subsample article was published per year during this time period. In other words, *only one* article referring to the Cleveland team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery as a public issue was published per year in the *Plain Dealer* during the last five years represented in the data set. This finding suggests that public discussion and debate surrounding the Cleveland team’s (previously?) controversial name and mascot nearly has ceased in recent years. The relegation of the team’s name and mascot to non-issue status in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere inherently is problematic for opponents of the team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery, whose claims-making in this environment seems to have been virtually unnoticed since 2002.

This analysis, which compared the original and subsample articles with regard to pertinent article characteristics, provided further support for the existence of several trends in the data. For instance, subsample articles, selected specifically because they addressed the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of the “Indians” moniker and the Chief Wahoo mascot as a *public issue*, rarely included mentions of the Committee of 500 Years
by name. Furthermore, these articles denote the limited attention granted this issue both
during the off-season and during the most recent period of time (i.e., 2002 – 2006)
represented in the data set. Once these trends in the original sample were corroborated by
my analysis of the subsample articles, I turned my attention to the remaining research
questions.

*Presence and Prevalence of Themes in Subsample Articles*

I identified eighteen different themes surrounding the mascot issue in the
Cleveland socio-cultural sphere; Table 5.5 illustrates the number of subsample articles
that mention each of these emergent themes. Because each theme was dummy coded to
determine its *presence* in each article, the number of thematic mentions per article is not
noted; rather, Table 5.5 depicts the *existence* of a specified theme within each article.
Likewise, the percentages provided in the table depict the percentage of articles that
contain *at least one mention* of the specified theme. In the following paragraphs, I
provide a descriptive summary of each of the identified themes. I organize this
discussion according to the percentage of articles that address each theme; thus, I
explicate the themes that are present in more than 50 % of the subsample articles,
followed by themes present in between 25 % and 50 % of the articles and themes present
in less than 25 % of the subsample articles respectively.

*Themes present in more than 50 % of subsample articles:* Two themes,*
*offensiveness* and *racism*, were addressed in more than half of the subsample articles.
Table 5.5: Presence and Prevalence of Subsample Themes (n=136 articles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>Number of Articles w/ Mentions</th>
<th>% of Articles w/ Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offensiveness</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial metaphor</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public space</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion / spirituality</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legality</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This finding clearly demonstrates the influence that the cultural ideas and meanings expressed by these themes had on Cleveland residents as they grappled with the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots. Approximately 69% (n=94) of subsample articles contained the offensiveness theme, which expressed contradictory sentiments about whether or not the team’s “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot should be deemed offensive. Some articles implied that American Indians simply did not know how to have fun or were being irrational and overly sensitive about the mascot issue. For example, the author of one article stated, “Clearly, a mainstream term like ‘Indians’ cannot be deemed offensive by reasonable people” (emphasis added, Colombo 1999: 9B) and another author maintained that the “only ones who have a problem with [the team’s name] have made it their problem” (Munger 2000: 8B). This sentiment is summarized succinctly by yet another author who stated that Chief Wahoo was “a sports logo, nothing else. Its presence only offends those who are looking for ways to be offended” (Ripley 2000b: 4G). In contrast, some articles contained sentiments suggesting that the use of such imagery was offensive, demeaning, degrading, insulting, and/or insensitive to American Indian people. For example, Pomerantz (1999: 4D) stated, “The issue is not whether white, black, Asian or Hispanic Clevelanders believe that the team name should be construed as derogatory … but whether Native Americans feel that way. Obviously, they do.”

The racism theme also was addressed frequently in subsample articles; approximately 56% (n=76) of the articles contained some reference to the racist nature of pseudo-Indian imagery. Some articles contained comments implying that accusations of
racism were absurd, while others suggested that the team’s name and mascot were *inherently* racist because they relegated American Indians to a subordinate status in the Cleveland community and in the broader United States society. Many of the latter articles simply referred to the “racist” team name or the “racist” Chief Wahoo, while other articles contextualized the issue. For example, the author of one letter to the editor deliberated, “After centuries-long exploitation of native peoples, this activity degrades all involved. The basic question stands on the plain and simple facts: Is it right for a sports team name to be that of a race of people, and is it right to use a *racist* cartoon caricature as a logo?” (emphasis added, Roche 2000: 4G). The references to *racism* in some articles were similarly thoughtful, but slightly more antagonist, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

> Never have I been more ashamed to say that I am from Cleveland. This type of intolerant behavior is befitting of 1960s Birmingham, not Cleveland in 1999 …. By denying the legitimacy of protests against the symbol … the city is propagating a *racist* legacy that legitimizes the title ‘Mistake by the Lake’ (emphasis added, Tamaskar 1999: 4D).

The author of this comment clearly insinuates that the city of Cleveland, which is situated on Lake Erie, has earned a derogatory nickname – the “Mistake by the Lake” – because Cleveland residents continue to support the team’s racist “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot.

*Themes present in between 25 and 50 % of subsample articles:* Five themes, including *imagery, honor, racial metaphor, tradition,* and *harm,* were present in between one-quarter and one-half of subsample articles. The *imagery* theme, which was present in approximately 43 % (n=59) of these articles, contained sentiments regarding the
meaning of the Chief Wahoo image. For instance, Munger (2000: 8B), cited above, stated that “Chief Wahoo is not a swastika” and therefore, people who protest the image should “get off that old tack.” Kamm (2000: 12B) asserted that the image, contrary to being symbolic of hatred, “has inspired affection for Native Americans and kindled a sense of brotherhood between them and Americans of other descent.” Furthermore, the Chief Wahoo icon repeatedly was referred to as a “friendly face” or a “cute cartoon” that should not be granted any meaning beyond its association with the Cleveland baseball team. In contrast, Chief Wahoo was described in some articles as a “garish figure” (Harsa 2000: 4G) or “disgusting caricature” (Corthell 2000: 4G) that perpetuated harmful stereotypes of American Indian people.

The *honor* theme was present in approximately 41% (n=56) of subsample articles. These articles contained sentiments regarding the honorable or dishonorable nature of the team’s name and mascot. In some articles it was noted that the team was named in honor of Indigenous Americans. For instance, O’Konowitz (1993: 1G) stated that it was “unfortunate” that some people wished to change the team’s name, “especially since the team was named in honor of the first American Indian to play in the Major Leagues [i.e., Louis Sockalexis].” Articles that contained contradictory sentiments regarding the theme of *honor* suggested that American Indians did not feel honored and therefore, the name and mascot should be eliminated. This latter group of articles implied that the idea that pseudo-Indian mascots were honorable was a social and cultural fiction produced by the dominant sectors of society to maintain the status quo.
The *racial metaphor* was a theme addressed in approximately 30% (n=41) of subsample articles. The sentiments expressed within this theme compared pseudo-Indian mascots to stereotypical images of other human groups. Thus, some articles stated that the Cleveland baseball franchise’s “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot were *comparable* to Notre Dame’s “Fighting Irish,” Boston’s “Celtics,” and Minnesota’s “Vikings.” This sentiment typically was followed by the “logical” assumption that if these team names and mascots continued to exist is the contemporary era, then the “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot also should be retained. Opposing sentiments proposed that Chief Wahoo was *more synonymous* with Little Black Sambo and the Frito Bandito, images that have receded into history due to their inappropriate depictions of certain racialized human groups. Therefore, the authors of these comments suggested that the Cleveland team’s pseudo-Indian imagery should be abandoned.

References to *tradition* were present in approximately 29% (n=40) of the subsample articles. In articles exhibiting this theme, many Clevelanders, like Ripley (1999: 10B), claimed that the team’s name and mascot should be retained because they have been “a part of [Cleveland] heritage for so many years.” Some commentators waxed nostalgic; for instance, a number of articles described childhood memories of going to “Indians” baseball games. The authors of these articles often suggested that Clevelanders who wanted to rename the team were disloyal and traitorous. Other commentators were opposed to maintaining this particular Cleveland tradition, stating that the “Indians” moniker and the Chief Wahoo mascot were an embarrassment and a “black mark” on the city of Cleveland. For instance, Brewton and Virnelson (2000: 41)
stated, “Some can’t think critically long enough to question whether ‘the way it has always been’ is right or not.” They concluded their letter to the editor by saying, “Come on, folks. Let’s wake up and do the right thing. Wahoo must go” (Brewton and Virnelson 2000: 41).

Finally, harm was addressed in approximately 27% (n=37) of subsample articles. Although some articles proposed that only the eradication of the team’s name and mascot would result in harm to the community of Cleveland, others suggested that it was the continuing usage of pseudo-Indian imagery that was harmful. The latter group of articles maintained that pseudo-Indian imagery dehumanized Indigenous Americans by concealing their oppressive histories as well as their contemporary existence and realities.

 Themes present in less than 25% of subsample articles: Each of the remaining themes defining the mascot issue in Cleveland was present in less than one-quarter of the subsample articles. These themes were not as prominent as the themes explicated above, and therefore, represent “cultural packages” of meaning that were less available to Cleveland residents making claims in support of or in opposition to the team’s name and mascot. Because the cultural ideas and meanings expressed by these themes were utilized less aggressively by members of the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere, I summarize them in less detail.

As depicted in Table 5.6, the themes of importance, power, numbers, morality, ownership, and money were present in between 15% (n=20) and 18% (n=25) of the subsample articles. In articles with importance mentions, commentators either suggested that too much time already had been spent on the mascot issue or they maintained that the
issue must remain a top priority because the presence of pseudo-Indian mascots was indicative of more extensive race-based problems in society. Some articles mentioning *power* insisted that the people who suggested that Cleveland’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery was inappropriate were part of an overly politically correct (“PC”) movement that was forcing its views on everyone else. Other articles mentioning *power* claimed that the political powerlessness of American Indian people was the real problem. In articles with *numbers* mentions, some people claimed that the sentiments of the majority of Clevelanders should take precedence – a contention that unequivocally would result in preservation of the team’s name and mascot. Individuals who disagreed with this claim pointed out the diminutive size of the American Indian population in Cleveland, the inevitable result of historical atrocities (such as genocide and relocation) committed against this racial group. In articles exhibiting the theme of *morality*, the claims presented either suggested that “moral capital” should not be expended on the pseudo-Indian mascot issue or that the retention of such imagery was a horrible injustice that must be rectified. Some articles with the *ownership* theme implied that the baseball team’s name and mascot belonged to the city of Cleveland and its residents. These articles presented a case for retaining the name and mascot because the majority of Clevelanders supported their use. In other articles in which this theme was present, commentators were adamant that American Indians had the right to possess any imagery that depicted them and/or aspects of their cultures, and thus, members of the American Indian community should have the final word in this debate. Finally, in articles addressing *money*, some Cleveland community members claimed that the team’s pseudo-
Indian imagery was too profitable to eradicate, while others intimated that economics should never be prioritized over human rights.

The themes of intent, censorship, public space, religion/spirituality, and legality were present in between 6% (n=8) and 10% (n=14) of the subsample articles. Articles with the intentionality theme discussed whether or not intent was a legitimate argument. While this theme was present in a variety of articles, the other themes mentioned in 10% or less of the articles in the subsample were less relevant to the overall debate surrounding the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots in Cleveland. The articles with censorship, public space, and/or legality themes present explicitly focused on specific events in the Cleveland environment. For instance, a state senator wanted to prevent the allocation of public funds to any entity (e.g., the Cleveland baseball team or a local high school) that utilized imagery that could be deemed racially hostile or offensive. This proposal sparked a debate about first amendment rights which was commented on in a number of Plain Dealer newspaper articles and letters to the editor. Finally, the religion/spirituality theme was present in approximately 9% (n=12) of subsample articles. In these articles, members of Cleveland’s religious community debated the mascot issue amongst themselves and in doing so, referred to many of the previously discussed themes, including racism, harm, morality, importance, numbers, and intent. At the heart of this discussion were contradictory viewpoints regarding the church’s involvement in the mascot debate. For instance, some members of Cleveland’s religious community were afraid that the church’s involvement in this issue would alienate congregation members, while others insisted that the church could not ignore
discriminatory acts against American Indians, specifically when spiritual elements of American Indian cultures were trivialized by pseudo-Indian icons.

“Anti-Wahoo” versus “Pro-Wahoo” Sentiments

A chi-square analysis was used to determine if certain themes displayed a significant association with articles exhibiting either “Anti-Wahoo” or “Pro-Wahoo” overtones. In other words, I utilized the chi-square analysis to determine whether the distribution of themes across “Anti-Wahoo” and “Pro-Wahoo” articles was not likely to be the result of chance. As noted in Chapter Three, the elimination of articles exhibiting a “Neutral” overtone reduced the number of articles included in my final analysis to 81. In the following paragraphs, I describe the six themes that were significantly associated with article “overtone” at the .05 level. The significant association between these themes and article “overtone” suggests that the distribution of these themes was not random, and therefore, these themes may reflect the “ideological packages” most likely to be drawn from Clevelanders’ cultural “tool kits” when they made claims either in support of or opposed to the retention of the “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot.

Table 5.6 presents the significant findings of the cross-tabulation of article “overtone” by “theme.” As noted, six themes – harm, morality, racism, importance, ownership, and power – were significantly associated with article overtone. The table is organized to display the themes more likely to be present in articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone (i.e., harm, morality, and racism), followed by the themes more likely to be present in articles with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone (i.e., importance, ownership, and
Table 5.6: Frequency of Themes Present in “Anti-Wahoo” and “Pro-Wahoo” Articles (n=81 articles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme*</th>
<th>Total (n= 81)</th>
<th>Anti-Wahoo (n= 53)</th>
<th>Pro-Wahoo (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes ** associated with Anti-Wahoo articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm</td>
<td>24 % (19)</td>
<td>32 % (17)</td>
<td>7 % (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>21 % (17)</td>
<td>32 % (17)</td>
<td>0 % (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>47 % (38)</td>
<td>62 % (33)</td>
<td>18 % (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes ** associated with Pro-Wahoo articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>20 % (16)</td>
<td>13 % (7)</td>
<td>32 % (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>19 % (15)</td>
<td>9 % (5)</td>
<td>36 % (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>24 % (19)</td>
<td>15 % (8)</td>
<td>39 % (11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Themes were dummy coded to denote their presence in subsample articles.
** Themes reported were significantly associated with article “overtone” at the .05 level.

Furthermore, because I utilized a dummy-coded variable to denote the presence of each theme in the articles, the table depicts only the percentage of articles in which each theme was present in the reduced subsample (n=81), articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone (n=53), and articles with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone (n=28), respectively.

“Anti-Wahoo” articles: Approximately one-quarter (24 %, n=19) of the articles represented in this cross-tabulation contained references to harm with regard to pseudo-Indian mascots. Among articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone, nearly one-third (32 %, n=17) addressed the issue of harm. In contrast, only 7 % (n=2) of the articles with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone included any reference to this theme. Thus, the individuals arguing for elimination of the team’s name and mascot were more likely to address the issue in terms of the harms created and perpetuated by pseudo-Indian imagery. As noted,
the thematic category of *harm* encapsulates a number of claims made in opposition to pseudo-Indian imagery in Cleveland. Many “Anti-Wahoo” articles contained claims indicating that pseudo-Indian imagery conceals the oppressive histories of American Indians in the United States by presenting inaccurate depictions of this racialized group. For instance, one “Anti-Wahoo” advocate maintained that the team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery diminished the effects of the historical genocide of American Indians at the same time that it indicated the “defeat and destruction” of these Indigenous people (Keonig 1999: 4D). Another author insisted that the “tradition of genocide continues with the use of images such as Chief Wahoo for commercial entertainment” (Munro 1998: 10B). Likewise, Tomazic (1999: 4D) admonished that the “logo of a leering subhuman” only “[rubs] salt in [the] hideous historical wound” of genocide (Tomazic 1999: 4D). Others agreed that pseudo-Indian mascots, such as Chief Wahoo, relegated contemporary American Indians to “subhuman” status by stripping away their cultural identities and creating a group of subordinate beings whose historical traditions and contemporary practices were not deemed worthy of respect. For example, a spokesman for the Cleveland Archdiocese stated that the team’s use of the logo diminished the “human dignity” of American Indian people by causing them to experience “contempt and exclusion” in the city of Cleveland (Brett 2000: 1E).

This overview of the sentiments expressed in articles addressing the theme of *harm* helps to clarify why this theme was more prominent in “Anti-Wahoo” articles. It seems likely that proponents of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery would not want to direct attention to the issues addressed in “Anti-Wahoo”
articles with the theme of harm present. At the same time, the lack of attention granted the theme of harm by “Pro-Wahoo” advocates suggests that Clevelanders on this side of the debate had very few cultural resources upon which to draw when “Anti-Wahoo” advocates supported their claims in this manner.

Morality is another theme that was more likely to be present in articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone. Approximately one-third (32 %, n=17) of these articles alleged that pseudo-Indian mascots were a moral issue, while no article with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone even mentioned this theme. People who opposed the team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery expressed concerns about the team’s name and mascot perpetrating some type of injustice. For instance, one “Anti-Wahoo” advocate asked, “Why have so many fans allowed our love for baseball to limit our commitment to racial justice?” (Trimble 1997: 8B). A Plain Dealer reporter also felt morally obligated to speak out against the team’s continuing usage of the “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot; he expressed his hope that the Cleveland community one day could “patiently, kindly, gently, peacefully, [struggle] together in a deeper conversation over what it means to love thy neighbor” (Briggs 2005: E3). Sentiments such as these impart a sense of moral duty or obligation onto the mascot issue. Because people who supported the team’s name and mascot denied that any injustice was caused by the use of such imagery, individuals on this side of the debate refrained from discussing the mascot issue in morality terms. Once again, it seems as though “Pro-Wahoo” advocates did not have any cultural ideological “tools” to refute the morality claims asserted in “Anti-Wahoo” articles, and consequently, decided to side-step the issue of morality altogether.
Finally, the theme of *racism*, which was present in nearly half (47%, n=38) of the articles represented in this cross-tabulation, was more likely to be present in articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone. Approximately 62% (n=33) of the articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone addressed this theme, while only 18% (n=5) of the articles with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone contained *racism* mentions. The “Pro-Wahoo” articles with *racism* mentions denied any charges that equated the use of pseudo-Indian mascots with racially discriminatory behaviors; these articles mentioned this theme only to *dismiss* claims asserting that the team’s name and mascot were racist. On the other hand, articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone asserted that the name and mascot were indicative of racism affecting American Indians in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. Many of these articles contained condemnations of pseudo-Indian mascots, which a vast majority of “Anti-Wahoo” advocates felt were no longer appropriate in the modern era. For instance, some people insisted that such imagery was adopted prior to the sensitization of the majority of U.S. citizens to racial and diversity issues. They maintained that United States culture shifted several decades ago, creating less ethnocentric individuals who were more respectful of cultural diversity. As Tracey (2000: 4G) noted, “We are in the twenty-first century and are supposed to be a *more enlightened, sophisticated people*” (emphasis added). Likewise, Goetz (1999: 3F) pointed out that “advertising logos have been changed and updated to *better reflect our continued growth and understanding toward others in this world*” (emphasis added); for this reason, she can not understand why the Cleveland team continues to use racist imagery. Briggs (2005: E3) also expressed his amazement that “such a bizarre caricature of American Indians continues as
an influential symbol in a civil society” (emphasis added). Another somewhat comical but eerie sentiment was expressed by Eugene (1999), who wrote a letter to the editor in response to a Plain Dealer headline – “Indians for Sale.” In her letter, Eugene (1999: 4D) said that the headline “made me wonder what century we are living in” and she told Clevelanders that “the time is now to change the team’s name and the logo.”

As these comments clearly illustrate, opponents of the team’s “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot believed that the persistence of pseudo-Indian imagery was antithetical to broader societal goals of cultural inclusiveness. While these sentiments often were noted, equally as often the team’s name and mascot simply were determined to be “racist” with no further explanation. These decontextualized charges of racism, made by “Anti-Wahoo” advocates, were quickly and entirely dismissed by “Pro-Wahoo” advocates. Blauner (1995) insists that overuse of terms such as “racist” and “racism” typically has this effect because it puts white people on the defensive, which is counterproductive to changing popular opinion about a racially-charged topic. He advocates pushing harsh language aside and instead utilizing language that may be more precise and less inflammatory. (The comments cited in the above paragraph illustrate how this might be accomplished.) I think that Blauner’s (1995) analysis may be helpful with respect to the discourse surrounding the pseudo-Indian mascot debate in Cleveland; perhaps if “Anti-Wahoo” advocates used less inflammatory language, proponents of the team’s name and mascot would be more likely to take a moment to listen to their views, rather than dismissing them outright.
“Pro-Wahoo” articles: Three themes – importance, ownership, and power – were more likely to be present in articles with “Pro-Wahoo” overtones. The importance theme was present in one-fifth (20%, n=16) of the articles represented in this cross-tabulation. Surprisingly, nearly one-third (32%, n=9) of the articles with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone (relative to approximately 13% of articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone) referenced this theme. This finding is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, “Pro-Wahoo” and “Anti-Wahoo” advocates expressed inherently contradictory positions with regard to the importance of the mascot issue in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. “Pro-Wahoo” advocates often insisted that the mascot issue was a frivolous waste of time that could be used to address more salient social problems. For instance, one anonymous author of a “Pro-Wahoo” editorial told Clevelanders that “Native Americans face only-too-real discrimination that inexcusably degrades their quality of life,” and for this reason, “it is time to move beyond the Wahoo controversy” (emphasis added, “The ‘Chief’ Stays Put” 1993: 4B). Another author insisted that “there are larger fish to fry in the racial tolerance department” (George 1998: 2E). (Incidentally, this author maintained that the Washington D.C. National Football League team’s “Redskins” moniker was one of these “fish,” because the “Redskins” name “clearly illustrates a double standard.”) Many “Pro-Wahoo” advocates also purported views similar to Kamm (2000: 12B), who insisted that people who “wish to spare Native Americans from being demeaned … might concern themselves with the growth of legalized gambling at Indian reservations.” Gambling was only one of many “more important” concerns noted in “Pro-Wahoo” articles. Others identified a number of social problems that they perceived
as being more pressing, like the Marxes (2000: 41), who stated, “if the protestors want to do something worthwhile, they might address the real problems of Native Americans, such as the high rates of poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, and teenage pregnancy” (emphasis added).

In contrast, the sentiments expressed in “Anti-Wahoo” articles addressing the *importance* theme maintained that pseudo-Indian mascots were a significant problem that deserved Clevelanders’ attentions. For instance, Goetz (1999: 3F) suggested that “most of the ‘bigger fish to fry’ in this world center on respecting the rights of others.” She argued that because the Cleveland team’s “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot were disrespectful of American Indians, this issue, in fact, *was* exceedingly important. Other “Anti-Wahoo” articles extended this argument by asserting that the problems facing American Indian people never would be addressed as long as dehumanizing pseudo-Indian mascots continued to exist. This claim is logical because it makes intuitive sense that a population which is dehumanized would not be the focus of costly social reforms. Thus, the uneven distribution of the *importance* theme across “Pro-Wahoo” and “Anti-Wahoo” articles is interesting for a second reason. Whether or not an issue is deemed to be *important* has innumerable consequences on a population’s likelihood to take action to resolve it. “Anti-Wahoo” advocates wanted Clevelanders to discontinue their support of the team’s pseudo-Indian imagery, but “Anti-Wahoo” articles were less likely to contain the *importance* theme. The lack of attention granted to the issue’s *importance* by opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots, therefore, may have deleterious effects for members of the culture who have been committed to affecting change in this area.
Approximately one-fifth (19%, n=15) of the “Pro-Wahoo” and “Anti-Wahoo” articles included the *ownership* theme. Among articles with a “Pro-Wahoo” overtone, approximately 36% (n=10) discussed the mascot issue in terms of *ownership*, while only 9% (n=5) of articles with an “Anti-Wahoo” overtone referred to issues of *ownership*. Once again, this finding is interesting because of the two-fold nature with which claims of *ownership* were presented. “Pro-Wahoo” articles contained sentiments insisting that the team’s name and mascot belonged to the people of Cleveland, and therefore, Clevelanders should have the right to retain the team’s traditional imagery. For instance, a “Pro-Wahoo” letter to the editor written in response to a discussion about whether or not Clevelanders should be able to purchase license plates displaying Chief Wahoo stated that “Clevelanders deserve to have this choice” because “Chief Wahoo is a source of community pride” (Keszei 2000: 8B). Similarly, Colombo (1999: 9B) expressed contempt for those persons who wanted to “rip away from the people of this community something that has long been a meaningful part of the lives of hundreds of thousands of us.” These comments summarize the views expressed in “Pro-Wahoo” articles containing the *ownership* theme. Proponents of the team’s name and mascot often claimed that the “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot were Clevelanders’ rightful possessions. The authors of “Pro-Wahoo” articles made it clear that they felt personally affronted by individuals and groups who insisted that these symbols did not belong to Clevelanders, but rather, they belonged to the American Indian people they were meant to depict.
This latter sentiment often was expressed in “Anti-Wahoo” articles containing the *ownership* theme. For example, Prochaska (1999: 4D) stated, “Every group, whether ethnic, cultural, religious or gender-related has a right to self-identification and respect” (emphasis added). Similarly, Miller (1998: 8B) told Clevelanders who supported the team’s icons that they were “missing an important point: that of ownership.” She went on to state that “To truly honor the Indians, we need to acknowledge that their name and customs belong to them, along with control of the ways in which they are used” (emphasis added, Miller 1998: 8B). The ideas articulated in these “Anti-Wahoo” articles are not new. Researchers and activists who advocate for the rights of subordinated groups long have recognized the vital need for members of these groups to repossess the images that have been used by members of the dominant society to devalue them as human beings. Historically, stereotypical images successfully have been used to lessen, and in some cases, destroy the dignity of targeted human populations. During World War II, for example, repulsive caricatures of Japanese people were used to dehumanize this group so that gruesome assaults – such as the U.S. attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the forced internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps within the United States’ own borders – were viewed by the majority of American citizens as *reasonable* responses to a threatening situation. “Anti-Wahoo” advocates seem to understand the devastating effects that subordinated groups’ lack of ownership over symbolic representations of their group members can have, but they have not utilized the ideological constructs present in their environment to illustrate this notion to the fullest extent.
Finally, nearly one-quarter (24%, n=19) of articles included in the cross-tabulation contained mentions of power. Approximately 39% (n=11) of “Pro-Wahoo” articles contained references to power in comparison to only 15% (n=8) of “Anti-Wahoo” articles. The “Pro-Wahoo” articles with power mentions typically (and disdainfully) addressed the “cultural movement” toward “political correctness.” The Cleveland residents who made these claims openly were hostile toward opponents of the “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot. For example, Ripley (2000a: 4G) declared that the mascot issue was not “about being offended,” but “about political power.” He continued by saying that each time a “small minority group” with “political power … far beyond that of their constituencies” pressured “sports teams and universities to change the names of their teams,” they “whittle[d] away at everyone’s right to freedom of expression” (Ripley 2000a: 4G). When Cleveland Mayor Michael White banned Wahoo’s image from city property in August 2000, another letter to the editor authored by Ripley was published. This time, Ripley (2000b: 4G) stated, “Like many spineless politicians, civic leaders, and college presidents before him, [the mayor] has joined the chorus in giving in to a small minority of politically correct mind-police” who felt that their “petty little grievances” gave them “the divine right to tell the rest of us what to think.” With regard to this same issue, another social commentator, Yarham (2000: 4G) suggested that Chief Wahoo was “under fire again” due to the mayor’s “march to a politically correct, vanilla, don’t-offend-anyone society.” Although Bikulic (2000) wrote his letter to the editor in response to a different issue, he expressed sentiments similar to those of Yarham (2000) and Ripley (2000a and 2000b). Bikulic asserted that “the real
issue behind the protests [at Cleveland’s baseball stadium] is another battle in the so-called Cultural War”; he continued, “We have seen this Cultural War in other areas. It’s when a small, but vocal group of protestors want the majority to bend to its opinions.”

The few “Anti-Wahoo” articles with power mentions contained sentiments referring to the political powerlessness of American Indian people as the real problem. For instance, Tibbs (1995: 11B) noted that “[American Indians] have a low profile and very little political clout,” and for these reasons, their opinions on this issue were not being respected. Hauenstein (2000: 1F) suggested that only “We, the members of the white race in this community, have the power to accept or reject Chief Wahoo,” while American Indian community members “have virtually no power to do anything about it.” Furthermore, Deegan (2000: 4F) stated that he agreed with the people who claimed that this issue was “simply about ‘political power.’” He continued, “And judging by the fact that there are still many teams with logos and names that others find offensive, I would say those people seem to reflect the reality of political power in this country: Native Americans and their advocates have very little.”

In reviewing the ways in which the power theme was used in discourse surrounding the pseudo-Indian mascot issue in Cleveland, it seems surprising that “Pro-Wahoo” advocates have usurped this argument while “Anti-Wahoo” advocates have granted it (relatively) little attention. Terdiman’s (1995) analysis of “PC [politically correct] wars” is pertinent to this discussion; he states that contemporary discourse about “political correctness” typically is fomented by the powerful members of hierarchical societies. According to Terdiman (1995), claims of political correctness are used by
dominant groups to discredit the values of subordinate groups who historically have been 

disempowered. In other words, dominant group members use the language of “political correctness” (or power) to privilege dominant cultural values over the values of the “other” (in this case, the American Indian population of Northeast Ohio). Although “Anti-Wahoo” sentiments regarding power are exceedingly more accurate from a sociological standpoint, these claims are eclipsed in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere by the more assertive and boisterous claims of “Pro-Wahoo” advocates.

This discussion of power in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere is continued in Chapter Five, in which I summarize the findings from the data collected and analyzed throughout the course of this research project. In this final discussion, I explore the intricate relationship between hegemonic cultural ideologies and the universe of frames that exist in the Cleveland environment surrounding the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots. I also draw upon extant literatures in my attempt to shed light on the visibility of and multiple meanings imputed onto the controversial issue of pseudo-Indian mascots within this particular socio-cultural realm.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In the following pages, I conceptually and theoretically integrate the literature on social movement framing processes, social inequalities, and pseudo-Indian mascots with my own research findings. I begin with a broad overview of the findings to emerge from my content analysis of Plain Dealer newspaper articles referencing the “Committee of 500 Years” and/or “Chief Wahoo.” I proceed with the implications of this research, providing some suggestions for re-constructing the authentic realities of ownership and power in our society and increasing the visibility of hegemonic cultural ideologies that perpetuate unequal social relations between diverse human populations. Finally, I conclude with reflections of my own research process and a discussion of possibilities for future research.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

American Indian activists and their allies, operating within the United States’ racialized social and cultural landscape, persist in claims-making activities and strategies of protest concerning the use of pseudo-Indian mascots in the social institution of sport. My study focused on the cognitive schemas, or frames of meaning, utilized by Northeast Ohio residents as they attempted to define and redefine this issue in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. Before an assessment of the claims-making activities of Cleveland
residents could be conducted, however, it first was necessary to discover the general salience of this issue to members of this socio-cultural sphere. Thus, this research project was designed to address two broad research questions. How salient is the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots to Cleveland community members? How has the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots been defined by social actors within the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere? In the following paragraphs, I use these questions to outline the findings that resulted from two separate analyses of the content of Plain Dealer newspaper articles.

**Issue Salience and the Universe of Meanings Applied to the Issue of Pseudo-Indian Mascots in the Northeast Ohio Region**

The content analysis of Plain Dealer newspaper articles allowed me to examine the salience of the pseudo-Indian mascot issue to Northeast Ohio residents as well as to systematically discover the universe of meanings applied to this issue in the Northeast Ohio region. As Gamson (1992: 71) asserts, “media discourse is so central in framing issues for the attentive public” that “it becomes, [to quote Gurevitch and Levy], ‘a site on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality.’” It is this struggle that I wanted to document. Thus, I first investigated the overall visibility of the frames presented by opponents of the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery by examining the primary themes and a number of more general article characteristics of Plain Dealer articles referencing the “Committee of 500 Years” and/or “Chief Wahoo.” Next, I examined the specific themes utilized in newspaper articles coded to delineate between “Neutral,” “Pro-Wahoo,” and/or
“Anti-Wahoo” sentiments. I highlight the most critical findings from these analyses in the following paragraphs. It is important to note that when I denote theme “frequency” throughout the remainder of this discussion, I am referring to the number of articles that include explicit references to the specified theme, rather than the number of thematic mentions. This issue is discussed more fully at the conclusion of this chapter.

The first major finding from my content analysis is the limited visibility of the pseudo-Indian mascot debate in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. This limited visibility is indicated by a number of factors, including the overall number of mentions of the “Committee” and/or “Chief Wahoo” and other article characteristics such as primary theme, time of publication, location, and length. The original sample consisted of 233 articles mentioning “Chief Wahoo” and/or the “Committee,” but less than half of these articles (47%, n=109) specifically addressed the mascot as a public issue necessitating discussion and/or debate. Articles presenting Cleveland-area residents’ deliberations about the baseball franchise’s name and mascot were subsumed within the primary thematic categories of “Wahoo debate,” “Mascot issue,” or “Religion,” and thus, articles with these primary themes comprised the subsample.

The original sample and subsample articles are comparable along a number of critical dimensions, including number of “Committee” mentions, article location and length, and time of publication. Only 10% (n=23) of original sample articles and 6% (n=8) of subsample articles mentioned the Committee by name. As I noted in Chapter Four, the infrequency with which the Committee is referenced in Cleveland’s most popular mainstream news publication may denote the limited success that this group and
others opposed to the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery have had in defining this issue as a social problem in need of attention. With regard to article location and length, both the original sample and subsample articles often were published in the “Metro” and “Editorial” sections of the Plain Dealer, infrequently were presented on the front pages of these sections, and typically occupied a small amount of the newspaper’s space. Furthermore, both original sample and subsample articles are comparable with regard to time of publication. Articles in both samples were published more frequently during the baseball season relative to the off season and much less frequently during the last five years (2002 – 2006) represented in the data set. Most notably, subsample articles (which explicitly refer to the team’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery as a social issue) were published only once every two months during the 2002 – 2006 time period. Thus, these findings not only indicate that the mascot issue is less salient to Cleveland residents when the baseball team is not engaged in seasonal play, but they also allow us to conclude that discussion concerning the social implications of the team’s name and mascot nearly ceased after 2001.

The Cleveland team has not won any division championships in recent years, but its utilization of pseudo-Indian imagery certainly has not diminished. Whether the city’s beloved “Tribe” is currently participating in seasonal play or preparing for the next season, winning division titles or simply sustaining seasonal play, the city and the entire Northeast Ohio region are inundated with the grinning red face of Chief Wahoo. For this reason, it seems incomprehensible that the city’s residents would divert their attentions

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5 Almost half (46 %) of original sample articles and well over half (63 %) of subsample articles contained 499 words or less.
away from the mascot issue during baseball’s off season or, even more surprisingly, during the last five years in which the team has not performed as well. This phenomenon, however, is substantiated by the data, and therefore, tells a compelling story about the (lack of) visibility and success of pseudo-Indian mascot protest in the Cleveland environment.

In addition to discovering the visibility, or salience, of the pseudo-Indian mascot issue to Northeast Ohio residents, I used content analysis to determine how members of the Cleveland community utilize their own frames of meaning to define this issue in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. As noted, I conducted an analysis of the textual themes presented in subsample articles because these articles explicitly addressed pseudo-Indian mascots as a public issue. This analysis allowed me to document eighteen different themes that Northeast Ohio residents use to define, or make meaning of, the pseudo-Indian mascot issue. The themes most frequently mentioned in articles addressing the mascot issue are offensiveness and racism. More than 50% of subsample articles address these themes, suggesting that even if residents of Cleveland deny that the team’s name and mascot are inappropriate symbols, they recognize the fact that these symbols are deemed to be offensive and/or racist by some members of the population. Thus, the high frequencies with which these themes occurred in the subsample articles denotes the widespread acknowledgement of the “meaning work” engaged in by community members opposed to the use of stereotypical Native imagery. This finding offers some hope to opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots because it clearly indicates that their message is being heard, regardless of whether it is being accepted. Other themes,
including imagery, honor, racial metaphor, tradition, and harm were referenced in a significant portion (between 25 and 50%) of the subsample articles, indicating that Northeast Ohio residents have identified these themes as useful constructs for making meaning of the mascot debate.

As noted in Chapter Four, six of the themes that help to define the mascot issue in Cleveland are significantly associated with article “overtone” (i.e., “Anti-Wahoo” or “Pro-Wahoo”). This finding suggests that the distribution of these themes reflects the “ideological packages” most likely to be drawn from Clevelanders’ cultural “tool kits” when they make claims either in support of or opposed to the retention of the “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot. The findings from this analysis are particularly interesting because they can be utilized to provide framing suggestions to those opposed to the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery.

“Anti-Wahoo” articles were more likely to refer to the themes of harm, morality, and racism. These themes construct meanings that help to define the mascot issue as a social problem in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere because they frame the Cleveland baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery as an injustice inflicted upon American Indian people. Although “Pro-Wahoo” advocates sometimes included these themes in their discussions of the mascot issue, they did so only to quickly and uncritically dismiss the claims of “Anti-Wahoo” advocates. In other words, they provided no evidence to support their dismissal of these themes. This finding suggests that Cleveland residents who support the mascot are unable to offer themes or frames of
meaning that directly counter the sentiments encapsulated within the harm, morality, and/or racism themes.

Conversely, the themes of importance, ownership, and power were utilized more often by advocates of the team’s name and mascot. At first glance, these themes seem to offer direct counter-responses to the frames utilized by opponents of pseudo-Indian imagery. By emphasizing these themes, “Pro-Wahoo” advocates frame the issue in terms of its lack of importance to Cleveland community residents as well as in terms of the injustices that the dominant members of Cleveland society suffer at the hands of American Indian activists and their allies. In other words, “Pro-Wahoo” advocates often insisted that “overly politically correct” activists were trying to deny Clevelanders their right to the traditional symbolism of their beloved baseball team and were trying to usurp powers (by “forcing” the removal of such imagery when the majority of the population wanted it to remain) that they did not deserve.

These “Pro-Wahoo” frames seemingly successfully have redefined the mascot issue by constructing a reality in which the majority of Clevelanders are being “dispossessed” of images they hold near and dear to their hearts and within which their identities are rooted. For instance, several authors of “Pro-Wahoo” articles insisted that a “simple history lesson” would lay this issue to rest and went on to explain that the Cleveland baseball team has been named the Cleveland “Indians” since 1915. They concluded that because the name is such a longstanding tradition, it should be retained. It may be that the lack of knowledge about American Indian histories and cultures on this continent has contributed to an unrealistic construction of social reality which insinuates
that white members of society should “own” the “Indians” name. Perhaps if Clevelanders understood the intricate histories of American Indian societies and cultures, they would have more respect for these cultures (and their spiritual elements, such as the red feather that mockingly protrudes from the back of Chief Wahoo’s head), and they no longer would insist that they have valid claims to Indianness. Similarly, if the dominant members of Cleveland society were at all aware of the oppressive histories and contemporary realities of American Indian people, they could not rationally suggest, like Ripley (2000a: 4G), that American Indians in Cleveland have “political power … far beyond that of their constituencies.”

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The lack of visibility granted this issue in the Northeast Ohio region undoubtedly is problematic for American Indian people and their allies who wish to eradicate pseudo-Indian imagery from United States culture. In Cleveland, both proponents (e.g., the Cleveland baseball franchise) and opponents (e.g., the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance) of pseudo-Indian mascots are engaged in a process of reality construction with regard to this issue. The Cleveland baseball franchise, however, has the upper-hand in defining this issue because it occupies a privileged and powerful status within this particular environmental domain. As many of the “Pro-Wahoo” frames described in Chapter Four illustrate, viewpoints disseminated by proponents of the team’s “Indians” name and Chief Wahoo mascot have become part of the “domain assumptions” uncritically accepted by dominant members of the culture. The meanings applied by
opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots, on the other hand, can be seen as transformative ideologies that counter hegemonic conceptions of these mascots. Thus, the limited visibility of the pseudo-Indian mascot issue in Cleveland’s mainstream news publication indicates that the transformative ideologies espoused by opponents of the mascots are not being broadcast adequately to Cleveland community residents. Members of the culture who wish to undermine the hegemonic ideologies used in support of pseudo-Indian imagery, therefore, must find a way to disseminate their frames more effectively within this sphere.

In addition to drawing more attention to the issue of pseudo-Indian mascots, the findings from my content analysis of Plain Dealer newspaper articles suggest that persons opposed to these mascots might benefit from a number of strategies. Because people who support the use of stereotypical Native imagery seem unable to construct meanings that counter frames elaborating upon the specific harms perpetuated by this imagery, opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots might emphasize the concrete harms these mascots inflict on members of American Indian communities. For instance, psychologists and other social scientists have documented a number of debilitating effects that objectifying images have on members of the subordinate groups they falsely represent, such as the low self-esteem of Native children who repeatedly have been exposed to stereotypical representations of themselves (Baca 2004; Fryberg 2003). Opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots also might benefit from placing greater emphasis on issues of ownership and power. In Cleveland, these themes have been utilized with greater frequency by supporters of pseudo-Indian mascots, consequently constructing an
entirely false reality in which dominant group members are viewed as the “victims” of “politically correct mind-police.” I return to this discussion of ownership and power momentarily. First, however, it is necessary to take a step back and look at how the broader culture of Cleveland affects the ability of opponents of stereotypical Native imagery to construct their own transformative meanings of pseudo-Indian mascots.

Culture: Making the Invisible Visible

The saturation of the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere with images of the grinning, red-faced Chief Wahoo undeniably is an obstacle for opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots who have tried to define pseudo-Indian mascots as a social problem deserving attention in the Northeast Ohio region. The “Anti-Wahoo” frames purported by these members of the culture do not make sense to dominant members of the culture who have experienced Chief Wahoo as a harmless and fun-loving convention that represents baseball tradition in the city of Cleveland. Johnson (1997: 53) tells us that “the problem of seeing, of getting it, is … a general social phenomenon that affects everyone because, like water to a fish, the social environment is about the last thing we’re likely to notice.”

The social environment of Cleveland is saturated with false representations of American Indian people and cultures and this phenomenon inevitably contributes to the inability of dominant members of this particular sphere to understand frames that offer oppositional meanings of pseudo-Indian mascots.

Culture, or the “set of skills and habits” that we use to interpret the social world, is so deeply embedded in human psyches that we often fail to see how we use our cultural
“tool kits” to create and re-create hierarchical statuses in society (Swidler 1986). The propagation of successful frames by opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots, therefore, necessitates an awareness of how tools within the kit can be utilized to counteract the hegemonic ideologies of the dominant culture. Those opposed to pseudo-Indian mascots in sports culture strategically have applied problematic and transformative meanings to this issue, but their “meaning making” has met with limited success in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere. The prominence of pseudo-Indian imagery and its association with baseball tradition in Cleveland has contributed to the apathy and hostility with which “Anti-Wahoo” frames are received. Thus, it is essential that opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots formulate new strategies for making the racism inherent in these stereotypical Native images apparent to members of the wider Cleveland society. Opponents of the team’s “Indians” moniker and Chief Wahoo mascot need to find a way to make Cleveland’s invisible culture visible to the dominant members of Cleveland society. The racial metaphor may be a particularly useful claims-making strategy within this domain.

Re-constructing the Realities of Ownership and Power

The racial metaphor, utilized in 30% of subsample articles with either an “Anti-Wahoo” or “Pro-Wahoo” overtone, is an ingenious strategy with the potential to re-construct reality in terms of ownership and power. As noted in Chapter Four, both proponents and opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots utilize racial metaphors. While proponents of these mascots insist that pseudo-Indian imagery is synonymous with contemporary representations of other white groups (such as Notre Dame’s “Fighting
Irish”), opponents of stereotypical Native imagery use the racial metaphor to construct a reality in which American Indian people are being mistreated in ways that parallel the historical objectification and dehumanization of African Americans and Jews.

This latter claims-making strategy holds promise for opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots, but only if they are able to discount the “false parallels” made by pseudo-Indian mascot supporters. A false parallel, or in this case, a deceptive racial metaphor, is identifiable by the lack of attention paid to history, context, and power (Johnson 1997; Schwalbe 1998). According to Johnson (1997: 169), false parallels function as “smoke screens” through which social reality is distorted and/or obscured. In a structurally racist society in which whites comprise the dominant group and are protected by their access to white privilege, stereotypical representations of whiteness only cause discomfort to and/or evoke feelings of personal offense in white Americans (Johnson 1997). As Schwalbe (1998: 186) notes, “doing racism requires not only prejudice but also the power to discriminate in ways that hurt others.” The “hurt” to which Schwalbe refers does not parallel the discomfort or offense felt by white Americans when they are confronted by stereotypical representations of themselves; rather, the “hurt” inflicted on American Indians through the use of dehumanizing images penetrates the very core of Native identity and reinforces American Indians’ subordinate status and inferior structural location within United States institutions and the broader socio-cultural sphere.

To successfully counter the distorting “false parallels” drawn by proponents of pseudo-Indian images, opponents of these mascots may benefit from exercising caution with regard to the racial metaphors they use to define this issue. In other words, those
persons and groups who wish to draw attention to the harms caused by stereotypical Native imagery might generate more deeply felt support for their claims if they limit their own use of the racial metaphor to depictions of racialized, subordinated groups. When they use stereotypical categories of whiteness in their own efforts to persuade dominant group members of the devastating consequences of pseudo-Indian imagery, they unwittingly invite subsequent distortions of racial and ethnic realities from claims-makers situated on the other side of this debate. The attempts to create metaphors that extend racialized meanings to white groups simply do not have the explanatory power of images such as “Little Black Sambo” because they are “false parallels” that misrepresent, rather than elucidate, social reality (Johnson 1997).

On the other hand, when historical stereotypical images of members of subordinate groups (such as Nazis’ depictions of Jews as “vermin” or white U.S. residents’ depictions of African Americans as foolhardy “pickaninnies”) are displayed parallel to images, such as Chief Wahoo, depicting American Indians as caricatured nonhuman entities, target audience members may begin to grasp the horrific consequences that can result when a powerful group denies a subordinate group ownership of images depicting the members of that group. History, which documents the disturbing realities of genocide and lynching, has shown that the humanity of subordinate group members is denied when they are portrayed as subhuman. In other words, it is possible that illustrating the ways in which blatantly racist imagery from the past is synonymous with widely accepted images of the present will help target audience
members understand that groups denied the right to self-identification are not the powerful members of a society.

**REFLECTIONS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

As I noted in Chapter Two, my study of the frames used to define pseudo-Indian mascots in Cleveland was designed in accordance with the critical tenets of feminist research which recognizes the challenging but necessary practice of integrating social scientific investigation and political action devoted to the emancipation of historically oppressed groups. As a critical theorist, I began this study with a basic understanding of the United States’ white supremacist cultural context and how this context perpetuates the abhorrently unequal social statuses and socio-cultural locations of members of racialized groups. Myriad social researchers and academic associations have documented the egregious inequalities that affect American Indians living in the contemporary United States. Pseudo-Indian mascots objectify and dehumanize the members of these groups, effectively stripping them of their “essential character, their ‘subjectness,’ experience, wants, needs, and desires” (Johnson 1997: 204). The primary objective of my research, therefore, was to study the pseudo-Indian mascot issue in a way that might aid the opponents of such imagery in the discovery of successful framing strategies. I have offered a few suggestions for “tweaking” the frames already used by individuals and groups protesting pseudo-Indian imagery, but the ability to counter the often indiscernible hegemonic cultural ideologies that contribute to the persistence of stereotypical representations of American Indian people will require further work in this area.
Two limitations of my research require further discussion at this time. One of these limitations pertains to the level at which I conducted the content analysis of subsample articles. As noted, I coded articles according to whether they contained one or more of eighteen emergent themes, rather than coding the number of thematic mentions in each article. Content analysis, however, often is defined as a textual analytic technique that focuses on the frequency with which predefined or emergent words, concepts, or themes occur (Carley 1993). According to Carley (1993: 81), the most basic form of content analysis involves “a list of concepts and a set of texts” and a simple “count [of] the number of times each concept occurs in each text.” Although this explication of the methodology is simplistic and does not take into account the multiple forms that textual analyses have taken in recent years, it does summarize adequately the most frequently used and broadly accepted characterization of the method. Because I conducted my content analysis at the article level, rather than the level of mentions, it diverges from the format most commonly used by textual analysts. Thus, it is essential that I describe the possible weaknesses and strengths of my methodological decision to depart from standard content analytic procedures.

The method of counting word or theme frequencies in texts is based on the assumption that “the most frequently appearing words reflect the greatest concerns” (Weber 1985: 52). My study of the frames utilized by Cleveland community members as they attempted to make sense of the pseudo-Indian mascot debate, therefore, may have been strengthened by conducting an analysis at the level of mentions, which would have documented the number of times each theme was addressed in each Plain Dealer
newspaper article. Through my discovery of the themes mentioned most often by anyone addressing the public issue of pseudo-Indian mascots, I (theoretically) would have learned which concerns were most central to Northeast Ohio residents involved in this debate.

Weber (1985: 13) tells us, however, that “there is no simple right way to do content analysis” (emphasis in original). The researcher ultimately must determine which methodological procedures are most appropriate for her or his specific research agenda. It has been noted that “frequency-based comparisons make possible discussions of saliency and emphasis” (Carley 1993: 86), but I chose to record the “mere existence” of themes in each newspaper article because I felt that this technique would be more useful for assessing the universe of frames operating in the Cleveland socio-cultural sphere as well as the likelihood that a specific frame would be drawn from an individual’s cultural “tool kit” as he or she imputed meaning onto this issue. In other words, I conducted my analysis at the article level because I wanted to understand how Northeast Ohio residents were utilizing different frames (or themes) to argue either for or against the baseball franchise’s use of pseudo-Indian imagery, rather than assess which particular frames were most salient among these residents.

For example, imagine that one author of an editorial stated that the team’s name was not racist even though certain members of the population believed it to be racist, then concluded that racism was not the real issue. (In this instance, the individual may have noted that unrestrained “political correctness” was the authentic issue underlying the pseudo-Indian mascot debate, a common sentiment in this particular environment). I was
less concerned that this individual utilized the theme of *racism* three times and more interested in *how* she or he used this particular theme, as well as the theme of *power*, to assert “Pro-Wahoo” claims while discounting opponents of pseudo-Indian mascots.

Thus, due to my specific research agenda and my primary research objective (i.e., aiding opponents of pseudo-Indian imagery in their search for effective framing strategies), it seemed more fitting to conduct the subsample analysis at the article level. At the same time, however, it would have been advantageous to conduct both of these analyses (i.e., one at the level of the article and one at the level of mentions). This strategy would have provided additional information about the salience of themes utilized by social actors as they framed the pseudo-Indian mascot debate and, consequently, should be considered by future researchers in this area.

The restricted scope of this study of the frames utilized to “make meaning” of pseudo-Indian mascots may be seen as a second limitation of my research. Although some of the broader and more encompassing themes delineated in this paper inevitably affect the “meaning work” of opponents of pseudo-Indian images across the United States, regional differences just as inevitably contribute to the utilization of diverse strategies of resistance. My research contributes to the literature on framing processes because it documents the frames used to define pseudo-Indian mascots within one specific region over a period of time. My study of reality construction with regard to this issue is limited, however, because it is restricted to the Northeast Ohio region. Thus, future research should be conducted to explore the commonalities and divergences of themes used to define this issue in myriad socio-cultural locations. Making the invisible
visible requires creativity and perseverance; understanding how diverse meanings of pseudo-Indian images are utilized within multiple sites of cultural resistance will increase our ability to accomplish this task.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Bibliography


