

The Cowboy and Indian Opposition: An Anthropological Exploration of Myth

by

brian Campbell

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Supervisor: Melanie Wiber, PhD., Acting Chair
Department of Anthropology, UNB–F

Examining Board: David Black, PhD.
Department of Anthropology, UNB–F

Mary L. Blatherwick, PhD.
Faculty of Education, UNB–F

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IN LOVING MEMORY

of my grandmothers Mercelle Hannah and Hazel Keays Campbell

ABSTRACT

In the last decade there has been a growing First Nations movement that has challenged trademarks in North America for being disparaging. The most notable litigation surrounding this issue has come from a long legal dispute between a group of First Nations people and the Washington Redskins™ football team. The complainants have argued that the term “redskin” is derogatory and has negative implications because of the potential for fostering continued racism and stereotyping against Native Americans. In this thesis imagery opposing “Cowboys and Indians” is examined as being a symptom of a possible social myth that can negatively impact First Nations people. This is achieved by conducting image-based research that simultaneously utilizes theories of Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, and David Harvey. The abundance of trademark images and other imagery (such as toys) that utilizes this “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is called into question due to the blatant disregard for actual historical events in favor of a romanticized history that the makers of these images promote. This thesis focuses on whether or not the abundance of imagery opposing “Cowboys and Indians” in North America is being read as true by young adults in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Two research projects were conducted in order to evaluate whether or not young adults in Fredericton are critical of these images or deem them natural. It is assumed that stereotypes must be uncritically perpetuated in order for images to be harmful. Finally, it is argued that an approach to image-based research must consider the roles that myth and simulacra play in distorting reality before gauging whether or not an image is harmful.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

THE “COWBOY AND INDIAN” OPPOSITION

For some time I have been developing a concept that I call the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, where it is proposed that two historically incompatible characters have become inseparable in the minds of present day Canadians. What I mean by “historically incompatible” is that historically, “Cowboys” and “Indians” had little to do with each other. Cowboys, generally, were not involved in warfare with First Nations people. Instead, First Nations people were engaged in disputes with Union and Confederate soldiers, Loyalists, desperadoes and other First Nations groups. It is my suggestion that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition has more to do with the way that “Cowboys and Indians” are depicted in various forms of entertainment such as film, television, Wild West shows, music, etc., than it does with any historical reality.

I first became concerned with “Cowboys and Indians” when I was writing an undergraduate thesis about Barbie dolls. When researching toys I came across a problem that the toy industry has faced for a long time: how can ethnicity be portrayed in an inoffensive way? Most toys are mass-produced by large multinational corporations, and it is doubtful that these corporations are as interested in political correctness as they are with appealing to a wider market and increasing market share. This was probably the case with Mattel’s attempt at releasing an African-American version of the doll in 1967, a Barbie friend named “Colored Francie” (Urla and Swedlund 1995:284). Urla and Swedlund attribute Mattel’s interest in creating “Colored Francie” to a marketing attempt aimed at capitalizing on a changing social climate, where African Americans were being viewed as an untapped audience (as opposed to a non-audience) in the post-Martin

Luther King Jr. era (Urla and Swedlund 1995:284). Unfortunately for Mattel, “Colored Francie” was not commercially successful for reasons that I will not discuss here, as they are worthy of a thesis in and of themselves. Despite this, the corporate interest in creating “ethnically correct” toys has continued. Barbie has been African, Hispanic, and Asian American, as have many of her friends (Rogers 1999:47–57; Urla and Swedlund 1995:284–5). There is, however, one notable exception in the world of Barbie: toys depicting “Indians” have not received an “ethnically correct” treatment. For Lord, “Indians” are depicted in toys as they have been in other popular culture venues: “...The Native American Barbie does not copy the uniform of a specific tribe but reflects an outsider’s interpretation of Native American identity” (Lord 2004:186). Just like the “Indians” of the movies, the Native American Barbie is dressed in feathers and leather, with face paint, moccasins, long dark braided hair, and carries a newborn infant.

But toys are only a foil insofar as the “Cowboys and Indian” opposition transcends a number of products that we North American consumers come face-to-face with on a regular basis. Other than toys, television, music, and film, (all topics that have been discussed by Belton (2005) in *American Cinema, American Culture* and Davis (2002) in *The Circus Age*), they also appear in automobile names (Jeep Cherokee), food (Rustler’s Pepperoni), and tobacco (Big Indian Chewing Tobacco and the Marlboro Man). [See Brown’s (2003) *Who Owns Native Culture?* for a variety of examples]. Nevertheless, sports team names, logos, and mascots have received more attention than any “Cowboy and Indian” depictions because of litigation surrounding the name of a particular team, the Washington Redskins. This is the focus of a variety of books, most notably Spindel’s (2000) *Dancing at Halftime* and the edited volume, *Team Spirits* (King

and Springwood 2001). I will discuss the litigation surrounding the Washington Redskins in the next chapter.

The “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is worthy of research for a number of reasons. First, the fact that the “Indian” remains static, as an unchanging character in an era of consumer products where other ethnicities are being intentionally depicted in inoffensive ways is worthy of further consideration. Why is it that the “Indian” remains an “Indian” when African, Hispanic, Anglo-European (with the exception of the “Cowboy”) and Asian Americans have all managed to be depicted as citizens of modernity in the products that we buy? A second consideration is the “Cowboy” itself. Already I have given examples of how “Indian” products have been discussed in academic circles. Yet, the “Cowboy” has never received this kind of treatment or attention. Could this be due to the “Cowboy” being in a dominant role in the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition? The possibility that descendants of so-called “Cowboys” have had the power to define themselves historically, as European immigrants becoming authoritative figures in the telling of the North America story due to the displacement of First Nations people, needs to be explored. The “Cowboy” as a research topic has not received much attention and this may be due to the “Cowboy”, or the people who relate to “Cowboys” being in an authoritative role, while the “Indian” is in a derogated one. “Cowboys and Indians” must be understood together holistically because the former cannot exist (at least for long) without the latter, and this relationship must be explored. A third consideration is that depictions of “Cowboys and Indians” may be read as objective truth. This is a problem insofar as the depictions are stereotypes. The word “stereotype” will be used throughout this thesis to denote the way in which “Cowboys and Indians” were represented in various media forms throughout the 1950s and 1960s,

specifically television and movie westerns, and how these types of “Cowboys” and “Indians” are still being depicted today in a variety of contexts (such as the Washington Redskins logo). This use of the term “stereotype” is adapted from Baudrillard’s concept of the “simulacra” insofar as it distorts a complex history in the abovementioned media forms through simplified opposition. I will explain the concept of the “simulacra” in depth in the next chapter. This more specific use of the term differs from a dictionary definition of “stereotype,” which refers to a preconceived and over-simplified idea of the characteristics that are thought to typify a person or thing (according to the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*). The “stereotype” I am interested in is a very specific type of “Cowboy” and “Indian,” one that I feel has led to a totalizing view of both subjects. I will discuss this “total package” of “Cowboy” and “Indian” towards the end of Chapter 6.

HYPOTHESIS

It is curious that depictions of “Cowboys and Indians” rely so heavily on stereotypes in an era where depictions of “Indians” have been challenged legally and other ethnic stereotypes have been gradually omitted from the visual landscape. There are two main purposes in this study: first, to examine why and in what way the opposition still exists in our contemporary society; and second, to determine whether or not these depictions are being read as objective truth. The first purpose will be accomplished through a historical evaluation of “Cowboys and Indians” in Chapters 2, 3, & 4. The second will be tested via two research projects; the first, focus groups (Chapter 5), were used in order to prepare for the larger project of blind testing participants (Chapter 6).

The main hypothesis of this project is that when faced with the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition most people will read the opposition as natural or true. This hypothesis is adapted from a problem noted by Wiber in her study of human origin illustrations (Wiber 1997). Here, Wiber was searching for a connection between conventions (both artistic and paleoanthropological) and the narrative aspect of the images because she feared that popular depiction was being read as objective truth (Wiber 1997:9). In human origin illustrations, artists and publishers present images as hard facts, when really they have more to do with Western art conventions than historical accuracy. Images employing the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, however, rarely (if ever) make such a truth claim. Even so, the same fear exists for my project: is the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition being read as objective truth? If so, why? The concern here is with what I call a “critical gaze.” By “critical gaze” I mean the ability for someone to take a critical approach to the subject matter. This is adapted from Critical Thinking Theory, the examination and testing of propositions of any kind which are offered for acceptance in order to find out whether they correspond to reality or not. This is our only guarantee against delusion, deception, superstition, and misapprehension of ourselves and our earthly circumstances (Sumner 1940:632–3). People with a “critical gaze” should be able to guard themselves against things such as delusion and deception. The hypothesis of this thesis is that most people lack a “critical gaze” when they experience the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition. If, however, a “critical gaze” is demonstrated among participants when faced with the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, what does this mean? I will return to this issue in Chapters 5 and 6 when discussing the two research projects undertaken in preparation for this thesis, and will discuss the implications of the research findings in Chapter 7.

The hypothesis can only be tested once it is established that “Cowboy and Indian” depictions are abundant and consistent in North America. This is the purpose of Chapters 2, 3, & 4. This can only be achieved through outlining the historical processes that led to the success of these depictions in North America by examining the history of “Cowboys and Indians.” Initially, two synchronic examples will be given: the first, in Chapter 2, is an examination of the litigation surrounding the Washington Redskins through understanding how trademarks work in North America; the second, in Chapter 3, is an evaluation of a seemingly harmless toy, “Fort Apache” as produced by Marx Toys. This will be followed by a diachronic examination of “Cowboy and Indian” entertainment in Chapter 4. Chapters 2, 3, & 4 will also address the main theoretical stances that this research will take by addressing semiotics, postmodern ontology (via Baudrillard’s “simulacra”) and space-time compression (as developed by David Harvey), and how these theoretical approaches may be most valuable when used simultaneously in image-based research projects. I will also develop the main theoretical stance of this thesis by focusing on “myth” and “demystification” as theorized by Barthes.

Chapters 5 & 6 will outline the two research projects, the focus groups and the blind tests. Each chapter will provide the methodology, data, and analysis of each project. I will defer a detailed discussion of these projects to their respective chapters because it is necessary to build a theoretical stance and examine the prominent literature dealing with “Cowboys and Indians” first.

The final chapter will compare the hypothesis and theoretical stance of this paper with the research findings in the focus groups and blind tests and argue that if the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is truly a myth, then the Barthesian conceptualization of who engages myth must be rethought. This is due to Barthes’ suggestion that the

people who myths target must necessarily be uncritical in order to engage the myth. I will argue, on the other hand, that myth is akin to language, insofar as it follows a set of rules (lexicon) that have to be learned, and is a necessary aspect of communication that even the most critical people perpetuate through participating in this lexicon whenever a stereotype is discussed. I will argue that since myth is a necessary aspect of communication, it is only worth studying if a particular myth is suspected of causing harm for the people, places, or things acting as signifiers. In this chapter I will also outline what the message behind the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is. I will defer a discussion of this message to the final chapter because it is necessary to demonstrate that myth is taking place through demystification (one of the main purposes of this entire thesis) prior to making comments about the message that the myth contains.

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS A THEORY OF “COWBOYS AND INDIANS”

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will address complex issues facing two major image-based research theories: “myth” as defined in the semiotics of Roland Barthes (1972) and “simulacra” as defined by Jean Baudrillard (1993). Both will be used towards building a theoretical approach in dealing with “Cowboy and Indian” oppositions as they appear in trademarks and patents. The first of two synchronic examinations will be evaluated, a discussion of Washington Redskins related trademarks. This will be followed by a synchronic examination of a 1958 “Fort Apache” playset as produced by Marx Toys in Chapter 3. The history of “Cowboy and Indian” entertainment will then be addressed diachronically in Chapter 4. The Washington Redskins example and a discussion of intellectual property will be used as a springboard for discussing “myth” and “simulacra.”

WHAT IS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY?

Intellectual property (IP) is an umbrella term for various legal entitlements to certain types of information, ideas, or other intangibles in their expressed form. The holder of this legal entitlement is generally unconstrained in exercising various exclusive rights, reflecting the idea that what is produced is a product of the mind or intellect, therefore being protected by law like any other property.

IP laws vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, such that acquisition, registration, and enforcement must be pursued or obtained separately in each territory of interest. These laws are continuously changing and amalgamating through international treaties

such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) (Richards 2004).

There are four main types of intellectual property, though others can be found in different areas of the world (Martin 1999):

1. **Copyright:** Protection of creative and artistic works (eg. books, movies, music, paintings, photographs and software), giving a copyright holder the exclusive right to control reproduction or adaptation of such works for a certain period of time.
2. **Patent:** Protection of an invention that is new, useful and not simply an obvious advancement over what existed when the application was filed. A patent gives the holder an exclusive right to commercially exploit the invention for a certain period of time (typically 20 years from the filing date of a patent application).
3. **Trademark:** Protection of a distinctive sign that is used to distinguish products or services of one business from those of another business. This can include logos (the company's image), company names, and mascots.
4. **Trade Secret:** Protection of confidential information concerning the commercial practices or proprietary knowledge of a business.

The reason behind focusing on IP is to determine what role IP has in promoting depictions of "Cowboys and Indians" through various media. In the following sections I will only discuss trademark law in Canada and the USA. My discussion of trademark law will only look at sections of acts that have been used by people claiming that the use of Native Americans as trademarks is dehumanizing and should be against the law. I will

discuss the example of litigation surrounding Washington Redskins trademarks because of its prominence in literature focusing on indigenous IP rights.¹

SUSAN SHOWN HARJO AND THE WASHINGTON REDSKINS™

An abundance of “Cowboy and Indian” images can be found in North American media. As noted in Chapter 1, many types of products use interpretations of “Cowboys and Indians” (mostly “Indians”) as trademarks. Sports trademarks have garnered a great deal of media attention because of various incidents where First Nations people in the United States challenged the legality of these trademarks. The Washington Redskins™ of the National Football League (NFL™) is an excellent example of how sports related trademarks have been legally challenged. The controversy surrounding the use of the term “Redskin” culminated in a thirteen-year legal battle that the Native American complainants would eventually win (*Harjo, et al., v. Pro-Football, Inc.* 1999; *Pro-Football, Inc. v. Harjo, et al.* 2003; 2005). In 1992, activist Suzan Shown Harjo led seven Native Americans in petitioning the Patent and Trademark Office's (PTO) Trademark Trial and Appeal Board (TTAB) to cancel six trademark registrations (including the team's name, logo, mascot, and cheerleaders, the Redskinettes) used by the Washington Redskins and owned by Pro-Football, Inc. (Harjo 2001:189). The TTAB granted the petition, but Pro-Football, Inc., appealed to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, which overturned the cancellation on two grounds. The District Court found that the TTAB lacked substantial evidence to find disparagement, and

¹ Brown and Spindel both discuss the implications of the Washington Redskins in their books (Brown 2003; Spindel 2000). In the compilation *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy*, various authors use the Redskins example as a springboard for discussing IP rights, specifically in Harjo's “Fighting Name-Calling” and Rosenstein's “In Whose Honor? Mascots, and the Media” (Harjo 2001:189–207; Rosenstein 2001:241–56).

that the petition was barred by laches, an equitable legal theory which prohibits a party from waiting so long to file a claim that it becomes unfair to the other party (*Pro-Football, Inc. v. Harjo, et al.* 2003). The Redskins had registered their marks as early as 1967, when the youngest of the complainants was one year old. The complainants would appeal this decision in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which upheld the decision of the TTAB to cancel the registration of the Washington Redskins football team, determining that the name is disparaging to Native Americans (*Football, Inc. v. Harjo, et al.* 2005). The Native Americans claimed that laches should not apply to a disparagement claim at all because the law specifies that such a claim can be brought "at any time." The Court rejected this, noting that other language in the same statute specifically permits equitable defenses, and laches is such a defense. The Court then considered the applicability of laches to the case at hand; because the defense depended on the laxity of the plaintiff in pursuing his rights (which cannot effectively be pursued until the plaintiff has reached the age of majority) the Court found that the defense could not be applied against a plaintiff who had been a minor until recently, and therefore had not slept on his rights.

AMERICAN TRADEMARK VS. CANADIAN TRADE-MARK² LAW

In the United States, trademark law is based upon the 1946 *Lanham Trademark Act*. For the purposes of this inquiry, I will only look at subsections 1 and 2 of Section 2 of the Act even though there are a total of six subsections in the Act. I will only cite the first two because they were cited in the juridicial decisions in the Redskins case

² In Canada there is a hyphen in the word "trade-mark," while in the United States, "trademark" is a compound word. The difference is not significant, but I will use the Canadian spelling when talking about Canadian law and the American spelling similarly in order to differentiate between the two.

(*Lanham Trademark Act* 1946:§1052). Section 2 focuses on how a trademark can be cancelled. It states that, “No trademark by which the goods of the applicant may be distinguished from the goods of others shall be refused registration on the principal register on account of its nature unless it:”

1. Consists of or comprises immoral, deceptive, or scandalous matter; or matter which may disparage or falsely suggest a connection with persons, living or dead, institutions, beliefs, or national symbols, or bring them into contempt, or disrepute; or a geographical indication which, when used on or in connection with wines or spirits, identifies a place other than the origin of the goods and is first used on or in connection with wines or spirits by the applicant on or after one year after the date on which the WTO Agreement (as defined in section 2(9) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act) enters into force with respect to the United States.
2. Consists of or comprises the flag or coat of arms or other insignia of the United States, or of any State or municipality, or of any foreign nation, or any simulation thereof. (*Lanham Trademark Act* 1946:§1052)

The Lanham Act is significant for understanding how the TTAB and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia made their rulings. The initial TTAB ruling was based on Section 2, subsection 1: the three-judge TTAB panel unanimously decided to cancel the trademarks “on the grounds that the subject marks may disparage Native Americans and may bring them into contempt or disrepute” (Harjo 2001:189). According to Harjo, the only reason why Pro Football Inc. appealed the decision was because of a recent announcement that the team had been sold for a record-breaking eight hundred million dollars (Harjo 2001:190). The use of subsection 1 is important because it reflects that the decision was made by the judges as an attempt to combat racism and not because of a trademark infringement that deals with insignia in subsection 2, something that has been used elsewhere by New Mexico’s Zia in order to protect a religious symbol that has been used so often that it can be found on the New Mexico state flag (Brown 2003:69–83). In Canada there has yet to be a similar trade-mark case despite potentially

negative trade-marks. The Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian Football League (CFL) are one possible example. According to Brown, the main reason for this trend in Canada is that the Canadian version of the PTO, the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) has shown greater willingness to assist Native communities (Brown 2003:83–7). This may be true, but the big business implications of intellectual property and the fact that images of “Cowboys and Indians” can be found throughout Canadian trade-marks, suggests that similar legal challenges are possible in Canada.

Canadian trade-mark law provides protection to marks under the *Canadian Trade-marks Act* (*Canadian Trade-marks Act* 1985). In Canada, trade-mark law provides protection for distinguishing marks, certification marks, distinguishing guises, and proposed marks against those who appropriate the goodwill of the mark or create confusion between different vendors wares or services. A mark can be protected either as a registered trade-mark under the act or can alternately be protected by a common law action in *passing off*. *Passing off* is a system that has been inherited from the UK case law. For a successful action in *passing off* the claimant must first show that the owner of the wares had goodwill or reputation. Second, the claimant must show that the other party’s use of the mark constitutes misrepresentation of their wares. Third, the claimant must show that the misrepresentation could potentially or actually cause harm. Even though *Passing off* is something that is not found in many IP Acts, it allows for people or groups to make a claim on a trade-mark even if it is not registered. Nevertheless, all marks must be registerable in order to be protected under the Act. Generally, all visual marks can be registered with the exception of marks that possess certain characteristics prohibited by the Act. Prohibited characteristics include:

1. A mark cannot be registerable if it is "primarily merely" a family name.

2. A mark that can produce confusion with another vendors mark.
3. A mark that is "clearly descriptive" or "deceptively misdescriptive."
4. One of an enumerated prohibited marks such as government, royal, or international marks.

It will be interesting to see if Canada's trade-mark law is ever tested as was the *Lanham Act*, but the emphasis here is not in the laws themselves. The purpose behind this comparison of IP law in both countries is to demonstrate the differences facing indigenous peoples depending on where groups like Harjo, et. al., contest their rights. I do not believe that the solution to issues of IP facing indigenous peoples world-wide is to simply make laws better. It seems that another alternative is to expose the internal contradictions of images depicting characters such as "Cowboys and Indians" and how this is potentially damaging for both indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples alike.

The way that the TTAB judges handled *Harjo, et. al., v Pro Football Inc.*, suggests that depictions of "Cowboys and Indians" are starting to lose their influence in contemporary North America. The judges made a decision based upon potential harm posed by discrimination, and not because a particular trademark was infringing on another. Obviously, depending on the case, both are potential ways to deal with similar trademark disputes. The fact that the judges made such a decision regarding the term "Redskin," and that the term has been legally challenged by First Nations people, demonstrates that there is resistance to depictions of "Cowboys and Indians" in North America. The fact that the judges determined that the term "Redskin" (which the NFL claimed honored Native Americans for their bravery) is disrespectful and always has

been³ demonstrates that First Nations people are not the only people challenging this type of depiction. Does this mean that “Cowboys and Indians” are losing their appeal? If so, why do these types of depictions continue to thrive in various trademark images? In order to address these questions brands and semiotic myths will be discussed as places where “Cowboy and Indian” depictions are able to thrive.

BRANDING AND SEMIOTICS

In advertising, a brand is the intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, price, history, reputation and the way it is advertised. Contrary to popular belief, a brand is not only a mark, logo, or trademark. Marks, logos and trademarks may be the most easily identifiable attributes of brands, but these signifiers act as simple visual links that embody the complex emotional attributes contained in any relationship between entities and their consumers. The brand is the relationship, and the visual cue that works to represent, evoke and enhance the relationship. According to Naomi Klein (Klein 2005:5), the brand is the core meaning of the modern corporation; advertising, logos, mascots, and trademarks are only vehicles that are used to convey this meaning to the world. For Joel Bakan, author of *The Corporation*, the success of this meaning is based on a corporations' ability to use branding to create unique and attractive personalities for themselves (Bakan 2004:26). Bakan quotes an interview he conducted with Clay Timon, chairman of Landor Associates, the world's largest and oldest branding firm, to demonstrate that this logic of meaning and personification is fostered

³ According to Harjo, the term “Redskin” originated in the days of Indian bounty hunting, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and refers to the practice of bounty hunters scalping Native Americans to prove a kill in order to collect a bounty without being encumbered by transporting a body (Harjo 2001:190).

by corporations themselves. Timon says that the brand identities of corporations are “personification[s]” of “who they are and where they came from” (Bakan 2004:26).

If brands are the core meaning of the modern corporation (and convey this meaning to a public that consumes a company’s products), then brands are signs. As signs, brands must be understood in terms of semiotics. Semiotics is adapted from Swiss thinker Ferdinand de Saussure’s posthumous work *Course in General Linguistics*, which used the term “semiology” instead of “semiotics” (Saussure 1966). C.S. Pierce coined the term “semiotics,” and although “semiology” and “semiotics” deal with the same subject matter (the study of signs) there are some notable theoretical differences (Berger 1999:14). For Pierce, a sign is something “which stands for other things” or “anything that can be made to stand for something else” (Pierce 1958:228). For Saussure, a sign is composed of two elements: a sound-image (such as a word or visual representation) and concept for which the sound-image stands. Saussure says:

I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a *sign*, but in current usage the term generally designates only a sound-image, a word used for example (*arbor*, etc.). One tends to forget that the *arbor* is called a sign only because it carries the concept “tree,” with the result that the idea of the sensory part implies the idea of the whole.

Ambiguity would disappear if the three notions involved here were designated by three names, each suggesting and opposing the others. I propose to retain the word sign (*signe*) to designate the whole and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* (*signifie*) and *signifier* (*signifiant*); the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts (Saussure 1966:67).

For Berger, the Saussurean “sign” is important because it assumes that language is something that is learned, and that the words we use to connote things are not *a priori*, but are based on a system of signs, which are dictated by cultural norms. Signs are

arbitrary insofar as they have no natural connection to the signifier or signified. They are a matter of chance and convention (Berger 1999:11–2). For Berger, the arbitrary nature of signs is where the thinking of Saussure and Pierce diverges. For Pierce, signs are related to objects in three ways: through resembling them (the iconic sign); through being causally connected to them (the indexical sign); and through being conventionally tied to them (the symbol) (Berger 1999:14). For Pierce only symbols are arbitrary in nature and must be learned: iconic signs can be seen (such as a picture of a tree connoting a tree) and indexical signs can be figured out (smoke connotes fire).

Berger notes four main forms of signs: advertising signs; objects and material culture; activities and performances; and sound and music (Berger 1999:53–7). The advertising sign can be a billboard that displays a trademark that signifies the company, but it can also be a magazine page or a poster for hanging in a window or an image on television; the object or material culture can be a company's product; the performed sign can be a mascot; and the sound and music sign can be a theme song or jingle. Yet these are only a few examples of a myriad of possibilities. If we consider how Klein (2005) conceptualizes a brand as the core meaning of the modern corporation, then a brand is an ultimate type of sign, one that amalgamates the complex interplay of signs and what it is that they are signifying.

Umberto Eco claims that semiotics should be called the “theory of the lie” because of the “double valence” of signs and their ability to mislead (Eco 1976:7). A sign is anything that can stand in for something else and this “something else” does not necessarily have to exist or be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it. He says, “If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the

truth; in fact it cannot be used ‘to tell’ at all” (Eco 1976:7). Eco’s point is that any sign can be used to mislead as much as it can be used to tell the truth.

MYTH

The capacity for every sign to mislead is an important consideration when discussing brands and I will use this concept as a springboard for discussing how myth is defined in semiotics. Roland Barthes (1972) developed myth, as a subject of analysis in semiotics, in his book *Mythologies*. According to Coward and Ellis (1977:26), Barthes found that the systems of signs that are the rituals of eating, dressing, wrestling, going on holiday, etc., are themselves taken over by another system of signification which he calls myth. These are forms of representation that naturalize certain meanings and eternalize the present state of the world in the interests of the bourgeois class (Coward and Ellis 1977:26). Myth serves as a particular process of conceptualizing and sign-ifying the world, a process that is motivated by the necessity for a dominant order to present itself as a natural order (Coward and Ellis 1977:29). For Barthes, the process of naturalizing history into a dominant order is what generates a myth: myth transforms history into nature (Barthes 1972:129). Yet, this does not mean that myth is hiding the “truth” inasmuch as it is distorting it (Barthes 1972:121). A myth is capable of misleading (in the way that Eco claims that signs “lie”) insofar as its function (the function of every myth) is to render the knowledge behind the mythical signified as a confused, yielding, shapeless affiliation that distorts what it claims to represent (Barthes 1972:119).

What differentiates a myth from a sign is that myth is a *second-order semiological system* (or metalanguage) that relies on the system of signs. Myth is metalanguage insofar as that which is a sign (the associative total of a concept and an

image) in the first system becomes only a signifier in the second (Barthes 1972:114; see Figure 1).

In order to demonstrate how this works, Barthes uses the example of a photograph of a young African man saluting the French flag on the cover of *Paris-Match* magazine. As a sign, the photograph is a black soldier giving a salute, but as a signifier of “Frenchness” and “militariness,” the photograph conveys a different signified: that “France is a great empire, that all of her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors” (Barthes 1972:116). Here, the media (in this case a magazine) distorts historical events (in this case the entire history of French colonialism) in order to naturalize the myth that France is a great empire. Since the signified (France is a great empire) can have several (possibly infinite) signifiers, the major power of myth is its recurrence (Barthes 1972:135). What is meant by recurrence is the abundance of (and potentially infinite number of) representations of a particular myth that occur simultaneously in various media.

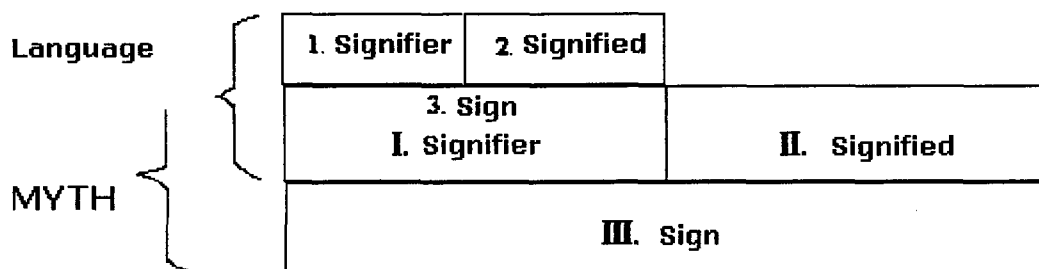


Figure 1: Barthes' diagram displaying his view of how signs are signifiers in the second-order semiological system of myth (Barthes 1972: 115).

But what does all of this have to do with branding and “Cowboys and Indians?”

According to economist Douglas B. Holt, particular brands (what he calls “identity

brands”) rely heavily on mythmaking and even more heavily on markets that thrive on myths (Holt 2004:39–40). The use of a brand to convey meaning and personify an otherwise faceless corporation is the mythmaking that Holt refers to. Yet, there are two types of myth acting simultaneously in Holt’s analysis. Not only is the brand mythologizing itself and the company through personification, the brand relies heavily on cultural myths in order to attract consumers who relate to the myth. The “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, as myth, is therefore acting in two ways when it is used in brand identity creation, just like any other branded entity. What is significant about the cultural myth is that it had to exist prior to its branding in order for the myth to have any meaning. The Washington Redskins did not create the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” but have participated in the recurrence of the myth. The opposition existed before the “Redskins” trademarks were registered in 1967, and the brand was meaningful because people already associated certain values (and perhaps themselves) with the mythological characters in the opposition. Therefore, the Washington Redskins football team was engaging and exploiting the opposition from its inception. A trademark has no function outside of brand identity promotion. If the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is a myth that some people identify with, then all brands utilizing “Cowboys and Indians” are identity brands insofar as these brands are targeting a specific type of consumer, one that identifies with the imagery and symbolism of “Cowboys and Indians.”

The abovementioned example of *Harjo v. Pro-Football Inc.*, suggests that “Cowboy and Indian” trademarks contain mythic qualities as defined via semiotics. In order to determine whether or not the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is engaging in metalanguage it is necessary to examine the history behind the narratives that “Cowboy and Indian” oppositions depict. This will be achieved through a synchronic examination

of “Cowboy and Indian” toys (in Chapter 3) and a diachronic examination of “Cowboy and Indian” entertainment (in Chapter 4). Since this paper relies heavily on trademarks and patents for analysis, both of which necessarily contain visual narratives, it is useful to discuss some issues facing historical inquiry and image-based research in general.

HISTORY

Historical studies face a dilemma: the distinction between what happened and what is said to have happened is not always clear. This problem does not necessitate myth (myth only occurs when history becomes naturalized), but since the distortion of history is such an important aspect of myth in Barthes’ analysis, a discussion of history is necessary before providing examples of how the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” is distorted and then appears as “natural” in toys and entertainment. For Trouillot, the meaning of the word “history” has shifted from the sociohistorical process to our knowledge of that process (Trouillot 1995:2–3). This is an important consideration for the following study on “Cowboys and Indians”: if the appearance of “Cowboys and Indians” in a number of current visual forms constitutes a semiotic myth, then it is necessary to explore how history has been distorted so that the myth can be challenged (or as Barthes says, “demystified”). Trouillot uses the *Battle of the Alamo*, an example from the frontier, when discussing the complexity facing historical inquiries (Trouillot 1995:1–2). The Americans lost the *Battle of the Alamo* after being bombarded for twelve days by Mexican leader Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Two weeks later, American Sam Houston captured Santa Anna, which in turn impacted the way that the geographic boundaries between Mexico and the United States would be set. Santa Anna would recover politically from this capture, going on to become leader of Mexico four times.

For Trouillot, the difficulty in understanding the *Battle of the Alamo* stems from how Santa Anna was “doubly defeated.” Houston’s forces, now victorious, then had the power to redefine history. As actors they captured Santa Anna and neutralized his forces, defeating him physically. As narrators, they gave the Alamo story new meaning, defeating him in historical narratives (and thus mythically). These events are not important in and of themselves. What is important is the difference between what happened and what our contemporary society believes happened. The *Battle of the Alamo* is a semiotic myth, and a frontier myth, but it is not a “Cowboy” or “Indian” story. Nevertheless, it is an interesting example of how easily historical events can be distorted via historical records and historical consciousness by the authoritative figures who have the power to define. Since this thesis is about “Cowboy and Indian” myths, however, it is useful here to discuss a well known “Cowboy and Indian” story, the *Battle of Little Bighorn*.⁴ There is a second purpose to using this battle as an example (outside of it being a “Cowboy and Indian” story): the mostly European-American army lost this battle, leading the authoritative figures to point fingers at the officers in charge of the campaign, rather than admitting that they had underestimated their adversaries.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn is arguably the most well known of all the battles that took place during the *Indian Wars*,⁵ a name generally used in the United States to describe a series of conflicts between the federal government and Native Americans.

⁴ This is the most common name of the battle. It was also widely referred to as *Custer’s Last Stand* and *The Custer Massacre* by the general public, and as in the parlance of the relevant Native Americans, *The Battle of the Greasy Grass*. None of these names are necessarily erroneous. Instead, they should be viewed as names that have a variety of different meanings based on who had the power to define and redefine history. Despite the fact that the Sioux army won this battle, the Sioux were not the victors of the *Indian Wars*, and thus did not have the power to define this battle. For this reason, use of *The Battle of the Greasy Grass* is uncommon.

⁵ There are an abundance of battles that occurred during the *Indian Wars*. For the sake of brevity I will not provide a broad overview of the *Indian Wars* in this thesis. It is more useful for the aims of this thesis to only focus on the *Battle of the Little Bighorn* for the reasons noted above.

These wars ranged from 1860 to the “closing of the frontier” in 1890, but also refer to any Colonial American wars between First Nations people and European immigrants prior to the creation of the United States (McDermott 1998:2–10).

This battle is significant for this discussion because it is arguably the most humiliating defeat suffered by the federal government during the *Indian Wars*. It was fought between a Sioux army led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and the Seventh U.S. Cavalry, which was composed of European-American soldiers and Crow scouts led by Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer. It occurred from June 25–26, 1876 near the Little Bighorn River in the Eastern Montana Territory (Carroll 1976:xiii). Like most battles fought during the *Indian Wars* there were heavy casualties on both sides, but this battle has come to be defined by the death of Custer himself and the near annihilation of his cavalry (Carroll 1976:xiii). This is why the battle is also commonly referred to as *Custer’s Last Stand* and *The Custer Massacre*. The campaign against the Sioux did not end here and Sitting Bull would eventually be assimilated into the post-frontier *Wild West Shows* (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of *Wild West Shows*). What is important about this example, however, is not the battle itself, but the controversial legacy and fame that Custer achieved after his death. Custer was already a celebrity of sorts because of his successes during the American Civil War, and was well known to the public due to being one of the most photographed of all Civil War officers (Wert 1997). What is striking about the way that Custer is perceived today as opposed to during the immediate aftermath of his death at *The Battle of Little Bighorn* is that the public generally viewed Custer as a tragic military hero who sacrificed his life for his country. However, when documents that revealed the federal view of what happened at *The Battle of the Little Bighorn* became public domain in the 1970s, it became clear that the federal

government saw Custer as a reckless buffoon who was responsible for both the deaths of most of his cavalry, and the military loss (see Carroll 1976 for a discussion of all documents released to the general public that reveal the federal view). Here a number of distortions reveal themselves due to a lack of compatibility between historical events, historical documents, and historical consciousness: the public generally associated Custer with heroism, developing a specific historical consciousness towards the events. A survey of what actually happened and how the federal government viewed these events demonstrates that Custer is not necessarily the hero that the public thought he was. Neither the federal view, nor the public view, takes into account the possibility that the Seventh U.S. Cavalry was heavily outnumbered and that victory was unlikely. Due to the public's interest in *The Battle of the Little Bighorn*, the posthumous Custer achieved a level of celebrity that he did not achieve during his lifetime. Yet, even though they made Custer a scapegoat, the federal government did not attempt to "correct" the viewpoint of the general public. Instead, it distorted the events in order to maintain itself through the public's belief that the federal government was doing a good job and that Custer's death was evidence that there was a pressing need for the government to deal with "Indians," the enemy of a mostly European-American public. As in the *Alamo* example, the federal government had the power to redefine history. The difference is that Houston was victorious at the *Alamo*, and Custer was not victorious at *Little Bighorn*; and the difference between victory and defeat, at least in this comparison, necessitates very different approaches to defining and redefining history, as it happened, in order to maintain the favor of the public.

As myth, "Cowboys and Indians" are presented in our society in a number of ways, of which most are accessible to us visually. The possibility that Custer would not

have left an impression of the American public if his face had not become so well known due to photography suggests that an image-based research position is worthy of further consideration. Since this thesis relies heavily on a discussion of how this myth is presented (or simulated, see below) to us in trademarks and patents (both visual forms of IP), it is necessary to discuss some theoretical issues facing image-based research.

IMAGE-BASED RESEARCH

A survey of recent image-based research publications such as *Visual Anthropology* and *Visual Sociology* reveals an aspect of visual imagery that is mostly absent from an already marginal area of research. These journals focus mostly on the theoretical and methodological uses of photography and cinematography in both disciplines. What is absent in this research is an interest in imagery that is not produced via film. There is a lack of inquiry into other forms of two-dimensional imagery such as paintings and comic strips, but most importantly, there is a lack of research considering trademark images. Another important aspect of image-based research that is overlooked is three-dimensional imagery such as sculpture.⁶ By ‘sculpture,’ I am referring to any three-dimensional object that has been sculpted regardless of whether it is art or not. Here, ‘sculpture’ connotes something more encompassing than the sculpture of high art, such as Michelangelo’s *David*. For this reason, I would like to turn the focus of this discussion towards a type of sculpture that can be found in the homes of many North

⁶ Even before a discussion of three-dimensional imagery can take place, a serious limitation in discussing three-dimensional imagery reveals itself: the only way to reproduce images in an essay is through the use of photography or drawings. Thus, I cannot present a sculpture in an essay three-dimensionally and can only hope for a two-dimensional representation of the sculpture. This may not seem to be problematic, but it is akin to taking a picture of a picture and trying to pawn it off as the real thing. The implications of this paradox are not new to readers of postmodernism and I will touch on it again in terms of Baudrillard’s “simulacra” below.

Americans: toys. The category ‘toy’ encompasses more than the category ‘sculpture;’ therefore I will only examine one particular toy in order to discuss possible ways of dealing with three-dimensional imagery in an anthropological sense. The toy that I am talking about is a “Fort Apache” playset from 1958 as produced by Marx Toys (see Figure 2). This is just one of many variations of Fort Apache made by Marx before the company’s bankruptcy in the early 1980s (Horowitz 1992:2). This “Fort Apache” will be examined in two ways: as a foil for discussing ways of developing three-dimensional image-based research; and as a means of analyzing the mythical content of the toy’s imagery. Before this can happen what is at stake in Baudrillard’s “simulacra” will be explored in order to suggest a theoretical connection between semiotics, simulacra, and image-based research.

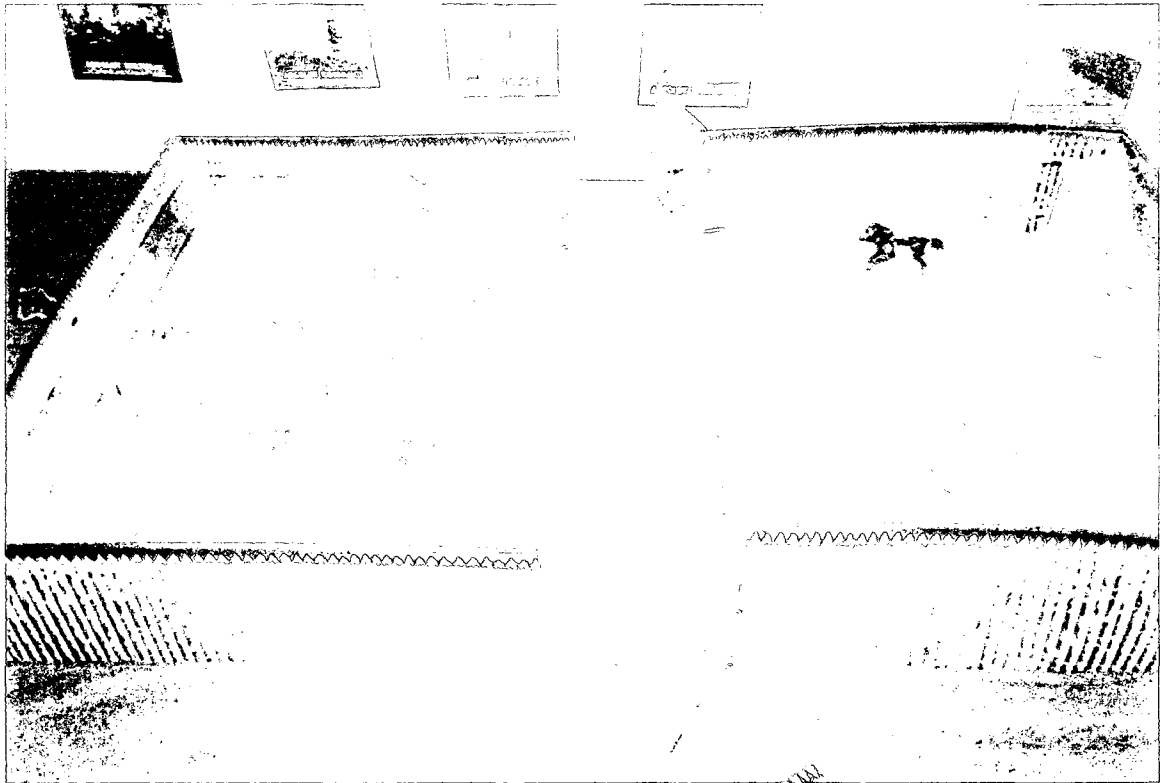


Figure 2: This image shows the particular "Fort Apache" as produced by Marx Toys that was used throughout this thesis. Note the stockade, lack of women and children, and the color-coding.

BAUDRILLARD'S SIMULACRA

The work of Jean Baudrillard and his concept of the simulacra is important for analyzing how reality is presented to us visually. For Baudrillard simulacra are *a priori* relationships between humans and the visual representations that they craft. For Baudrillard, this relationship has undergone three radical transformations since the Renaissance, beginning with *counterfeit* (in the Renaissance), changing into *production* during the Industrial Revolution, and becoming *simulation proper* in the twentieth century with the development of cinematography (Baudrillard 1993:50). Baudrillard claims that these three orders are intertwined with (and run parallel to) laws of value during their successive time periods. Similarly, each successive stage is reliant on dominant technology (Baudrillard 1993:50). *Counterfeit* does not connote deliberate fraud, but instead refers to a common theme in the history of both Western art and Western philosophy. Here, the artisan creates an imperfect representation of an absolute original, and more often than not (due to technological limitations), this visual representation is a sculpture or painting. A second characteristic of *counterfeit* is that the counterfeit is paradoxically an original itself, with few (if any) copies. For example, until the transition to successive stages, there was only one *David* and only one *Mona Lisa*. *Production* refers to the actual ability to create an infinite number of copies on the assembly line, blurring the difference between original and copy. *Simulation proper* occurs when the original has been so overwhelmed by the copies that the copies take on the authoritative role of the original in defining what is real. This has occurred because of the success of television, and photography's ability to simulate reality infinitely without a referent of any kind. Simulation simultaneously creates and reinforces stereotypes by

pretending to be the referent, and through reconstituting complex realities into simple oppositions. For example, Baudrillard says (Baudrillard 1993:63):

Both object and information already results from a selection, an edited sequence of camera angles, they have already tested 'reality' and have only asked those questions to which it has responded. *Reality has been analyzed into simple elements, which have been recomposed into scenarios of stable oppositions*, just as the photographer imposes his own contrasts, lighting, and angles onto his subject (emphasis mine).

It is important to note that *simulation proper* and its creation of stable oppositions is not the exclusive domain of photography and film. The era of infinite copies is one that encompasses the previous phases of image production and reproduction. A sculpture, or *counterfeit*, easily participates in *simulation proper* and can do so in a number of ways.

IMPLICATIONS

The compatibility between *simulation proper* and the mythologies of the semiotician are hard to ignore: in myth, history becomes naturalized; and *simulation proper*, pretending to be an original referent, or natural phenomenon, reinforces stereotypes. In both cases, history is being distorted. In simulation the distortion occurs in the production of images, while in myth the distortion occurs in the connoted meaning that the image contains.

This chapter has laid out the theoretical approach of this thesis as being one that incorporates semiotics and simulation in order to suggest that images are distorted or made natural when they are presented to us in a variety of media. The example of "Fort Apache" as produced by Marx Toys suggests that *simulation proper* has contributed to the constitution of the myth of the "Cowboy and Indian" opposition. A toy that contains "Cowboy" and/or "Indian" connotations is useful for examining the abundance of forms

that simulations and myths can take. This is not a new approach: Barthes (1972:53–6) has a chapter called “Toys” in his *Mythologies* and psychologist Ernest Dichter (1964:237–58) also has a chapter about toys in his book *Handbook of Consumer Motivations*. Both scholars approach toys in a similar way that involves pointing out that toys (at least as they appeared in mid-twentieth century France) have a function of presenting children with miniature “adult things” (such as trains and guns for boys, and baby dolls and ironing boards for girls). For Dichter, whose emphasis is on marketing, toys represent a means of “closing the gap” between children and adults (Dichter 1964:254). For Barthes, who addresses the same kinds of toys as Dichter, this type of “closing the gap” is wrapped up in the transmission of knowledge from adult to child, a transmission that has more to do with cultural norms than nature: “French toys *always mean something*, and this something is always entirely socialized, constituted by the myths or techniques of modern adult life” (Barthes 1972:53). If toys are necessarily wrapped up in the transmission of myth, in a way that constitutes a lexicon and metalanguage, as Barthes suggests, then an examination of “Cowboy and Indian” toys should reveal a different type of myth from the French toys that Barthes and Dichter discuss due to the denotations of a different signifier. Chapter 3 will attempt to demonstrate how and why the myth of “Cowboy and Indian” is taking place in American toys through the demystification of a synchronic example. Chapter 4 will attempt a diachronic examination of changes in “Cowboy and Indian” symbolism in entertainment to further the demystification process.

CHAPTER 3: THEORIZING “FORT APACHE” AS PRODUCED BY MARX TOYS

INTRODUCTION

“Fort Apache” as produced by Marx Toys is little more than a rusty, dented toy that seems out of place in my office. It has missing pieces, it is dusty, and one wonders how long it has been since a child played with it. It is obvious that the child (probably male) who acquired this toy in the late 1950s had a completely different relationship to the toy than any adult would. For a child “Fort Apache” could make or break a Christmas or birthday; it could generate prestige among playmates as a sign of economic status; but, most importantly for this discussion, the depiction of Cowboys and Indians contained within it could have a dramatic affect on how a child understood history, gender roles and ethnicity. A child who never owned a “Fort Apache” would have a very different relationship to the toy than a child who owned the toy, but may interpret history, gender roles and ethnicity similarly or differently. This is a dilemma that faced Mary Rogers (1999:1–10) when she conducted research on how her students interpreted the Barbie doll during a study in the 1990s: Barbie had become a “cultural icon” that every person in the study could identify, despite some people never having owned one. Rogers recognized that each individual had a different experience with Barbie, self-esteem, and self-image, suggesting the narrative/icon that is “Barbie” is empowering for some, but disempowering for others (Rogers 1999:1–10). The signified “Barbie” had different meanings for different people, and therefore, so did the signifier. The same is true for “Fort Apache.” While Rogers’ conclusion may seem banal, it is conceptually important for using Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra because it demonstrates that even though

images simulate reality through *simulation proper*, in turn defining reality, individuals have a say in how they interpret this reality. Individuals resist simulations and actively participate in the signification process. For this reason a person of Apache descent should have a very different relationship to “Fort Apache” than a person of European or African descent. It should also be noted that “Fort Apache” is not important in and of itself for understanding how stereotypes are simulated: it is one of a myriad of images that together constitute the dual stereotypes of “Cowboy” and “Indian.” If it is a myth, then it must, as Barthes (1972:135) claims, gain its power in its recurrence.

There are two ways to deal with “Fort Apache.” One would be to situate it diachronically within the history of “Cowboy and Indian” entertainment. This would take into account the ways that “Cowboys and Indians” have been represented both visually and textually in comparison to how they appear historically, emphasizing the ways that these representations have changed over time. I will return to this in Chapter 4. Initially, however, it is useful to interpret the subject matter synchronically by examining “Fort Apache” as one possible simulated form of the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition myth, in order to demonstrate that simulation and myth are taking place simultaneously. This will be accomplished through comparing the toy “Fort Apache” with the “real” (historic) Fort Apache. I put “real” into scare-quotes because Baudrillard (and other postmodernists) would argue that I have no access to the 19th century outside of my own interpretation of the interpretations of others. It is also important to note that this discussion does not attempt to create a total picture of Arizona, Apache peoples, or Fort Apache: all are subjects that are worthy of research in and of themselves. Nevertheless, some broad statements about Arizona’s history, people, and military facilities are useful for

addressing whether or not this particular toy is naturalizing a false reality by distorting the past.

THE “REAL” ARIZONA

The formation of the state of Arizona resulted from the aftermath of the American *Civil War*. In 1861, Confederates launched a successful campaign into the New Mexico territory (present day Arizona and New Mexico). Residents in the southern portions of this territory adopted a secession ordinance and requested that Confederate forces stationed in nearby Texas assist them in removing Union forces stationed in New Mexico. The Confederate territory of Arizona was proclaimed by Colonel John Baylor after victory at the *Battle of Mesilla*, Mesilla, New Mexico, and the capture of several Union forces. Baylor’s Proclamation Line of 1861 separated Arizona and New Mexico in terms of north and south, with Arizona being the southern territory (Wagoner 1970:2–7; see Figure 3). The Confederates had hoped to use Arizona and New Mexico as a means of conquering the State of California and also as a means of gaining influence in the territory that would soon become Colorado. The expulsion of Confederate forces from Arizona and New Mexico in 1862 led to the abandonment of Baylor’s Proclamation Line and the new territory was separated from New Mexico, not in terms of north and south, but in terms of east and west (with Arizona being the western territory) (Wagoner 1970:2–3). President Lincoln signed the bill that recognized Arizona as a Union territory on February 24, 1863 (Arizona would not become a state until 1912) (Wagoner 1970:2–3).

Indigenous peoples had inhabited the geographical region that became Arizona long before European immigrants arrived. Before (and during) the Civil War these

indigenous peoples had been almost entirely ignored. Neither the Union, nor the Confederates had any interest in gaining Native support. After Lincoln signed the bill all of this changed: the Apache became the driving issue of the political career of Arizona's first governor, Mr. John Goodwin. Wagoner (1970:34) quotes Goodwin (1864:43) as saying:

But for [the Apache], mines would be worked, innumerable sheep and cattle would cover these plains, and some of the bravest and most energetic men that were ever the pioneers of a new country, and who now fill bloody and unmarked graves, would be living to see their brightest anticipations realized. A war must be prosecuted until they are compelled to submit and go upon a reservation.

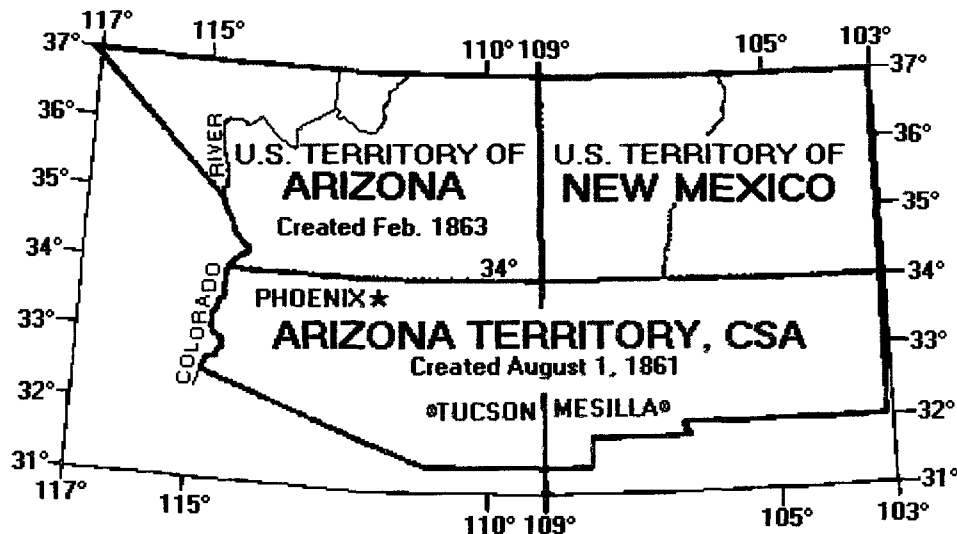


Figure 3: This image shows the two ways that Arizona and New Mexico have been historically separated. Baylor's Proclamation Line divides the territories by north and south at 34°. Today the states are divided by east and west.

This declaration of war against the Apaches led to a reorganization of Arizona's military after the Civil War ended. Goodwin asked Congress for money to pay for rangers to help establish reservations but was ignored for three years forcing him to do what he could with limited resources. This resulted in an army of five companies that consisted of eleven officers and three hundred fifty soldiers. It is telling that this army was almost

entirely composed of Maricopa and Pima Indians. Very few of the soldiers were European and there were twice as many forts/camps as there were companies (Wagoner 1970:48). Nevertheless, these forts/camps would become the epicenters of government forces in their war against the Apaches.

THE “REAL” APACHES

Apache is a collective name for several culturally related Native American peoples who speak a Southern Athabaskan language, excluding the related Navajo people, who formerly ranged over southeastern Arizona and north-western Mexico. The chief divisions of the Apaches were the Arivaipa, Chiricahua, Coyotero, Faraone Gileno, Llanero, Mescalero, Mimbreno, Mogollon, Naisha, Tchikun and Tchishi (Plog 1997). The final surrender of the Apaches took place in 1886, when the Chiricahuas, led by Geronimo, were deported to military prisons in Florida and Alabama (Ogle 1970:vii). The Apaches were the last major body of indigenous peoples to formidably oppose the advance of European-Americans into the American West (Ogle 1970:vii). For three hundred years Apache peoples fought with other Native groups, Spaniards, Mexicans, and European-Americans. They became famous for their intimidating military strategies, including the act of scalping their enemies and their use of extremely powerful bows, a legacy that can be traced as far back as Spain’s 1540 Coronado expedition from Mexico to Kansas (Laubin and Laubin 1980:9). According to Winship (1896:34), Castenada (the expedition’s leader) once wrote that he witnessed an Apache warrior shoot a bull through both shoulders with an arrow, “which would have been a good shot for a musket” (Winship 1896:34). Whether or not we can trust the accuracy of this account is not important. What is important is that the use of the bow by First Nations populations

(especially the Apache) quickly became a thing of legend among pioneers and has become a defining mythologized trait in many “Cowboy and Indian” depictions. Laubin and Laubin (1980) suggest that there is a certain irony to this trend since archery is no longer a popular sport among First Nations people. They claim that this is because, “Indians have been taught to regard [archery] as a mark of savagery, and until recently most of them would rather be caught dead than with a bow and arrow” (Laubin and Laubin 1980:9).

In his 1970 introduction to Ogle’s *Federal Control of the Western Apaches*, Jones (1970:ii) claims that the popular American perception of the Apaches is extremely distorted:

...The public’s distorted views of [Geronimo of the Apaches and Sitting Bull of the Sioux] and the exaggeration of other facts have created a mythology about Indian relations with frontiersmen, soldiers, and government agents. This is partially due to television and to popular Western writers who often become more interested in telling what they believe the public wants to hear than in portraying the truth or providing a complete examination of Indian-white relationships. The public also contributes to this growing quantity of half-truths and inventions. Like their forefathers who actually fought the Indians, people today regard all Indians as one mass, failing to distinguish between one nation or tribe and another, or failing to see that the most famous Apache leaders [Geronimo and Cochise] were not all from the same Apache nation. Furthermore, the public shows little interest in actual history, preferring to believe in a hero-dominated, romantic account of how a “superior” people (with whom the public erroneously associates) overcame an inferior one.

Laubin and Laubin’s discussion of archery, and Jones’s statement about the simultaneous distortion of Apache peoples by the popular media and the public, highlights the interconnection of myth and simulation: there is a sharp difference between what actually happened, and how the relationship between “Cowboys and Indians” has been presented to the North American public.

THE “REAL” FORT APACHE

Increasing encroachment by outsiders led to more consistent raiding by the various Apache nations; by 1866 Goodwin called for, “fair, open, and persistent war until the savages are exterminated or forced to bow in submission” (Ogle 1970:60). Some Arizona residents rejected this position. Putnam (known to historians as the “Father of Arizona”) announced that, “the military authorities assume to be the government” and elsewhere, the well-known civil servant, Leihy, claimed that the expenditures incurred by “fruitless [military operations] would have provided comfortable homes for all the Indians in the territory” (Ogle 1970:59). Many failed to understand that the Apache would not be as easy to conquer or exterminate as other First Nations people who were already in their employ (such as the Pima). During the remainder of the 1860s Arizona was defined by bloodshed on both sides. By the 1870s, Arizona was beginning to receive more military funding from the federal government and a series of new camps were built. The most important of these camps was Camp Ord, which was built in Arizona’s White Mountains in 1870. Over the next few years the camp would change names several times before becoming Camp Apache and later Fort Apache in 1879 (Ogle 1970:191). This post has become a defining symbol of Arizona’s history because it was the center of military bureaucracy. By 1879, the area surrounding the fort was the largest reservation in the territory. It was here that many Apache groups joined forces with the Arizona government. This should be considered alongside the abovementioned statement by Jones (1970:ii): although “Apache” has come to denote all Apaches in the present day, there were more than a dozen different factions and nations that were warring against each other long before Europeans arrived. It is significant that many Apache men would

become military agents (mostly scouts): the sheer number of Apache scouts would play an important role in the expulsion of warring Apaches to Florida in 1886.

Another important aspect of Fort Apache was its lack of stockades/palisades. There was surprisingly little fortification outside of manpower itself, but this seems to have been an economic choice since wood was scarce in most of the territory. Another issue must have been the dangers of fire in the arid climate. For this reason, most (if not all) Arizona forts lacked this type of fortification (Wagoner 1970:376).

MARX'S "FORT APACHE"

The toy version of "Fort Apache" that I am dealing with was released to the general public in 1958 and is composed entirely of tin and plastic. It is a fold-out lithographed suitcase that depicts a massive battle between Indians and soldiers at the fort. When folded out it becomes obvious that this "Fort Apache" has little if anything to do with the real thing: the fort is surrounded by a stockade and an inspection of the characters reveals that this "Fort Apache" is based on binary oppositions. The soldiers are all European-American men, there are no Apache scouts or Maricopa or Pima Indians, there are no Mexicans or Desperadoes, and there are no women or children (either Native or non-Native). The European-Americans are garbed in uniforms that seem to be a mix between American *Civil War* military uniforms and "Cowboy" gear. The Indians are similarly garbed in a hodge-podge of different symbols that have come to define all Native Americans: feathers and leather; bows and arrows. There is also a totem pole, which may have more to do with the public's perception of "Indian" than any historical reality, as the Apache peoples did not craft totems. The toys are color-coded: the soldiers are blue, while the Indians are orange. Color-coding varies from playset to

playset when dealing with playsets produced by Marx Toys (different toys will be yellow or red, etc.). Even so, color is always opposed between the two warring factions. Thus, regardless of whether Marx is depicting Vikings, Cave Men, Cowboys and Indians, or even Arctic researchers and Inuit peoples, the two opposing parties will never share the same color. (Horowitz (2002) presents a variety of color-coded examples in playsets produced by Marx Toys).

Other oppositions are also obvious: the European-American soldiers are always standing erect (except when depicted in an “action pose,” where the soldier is attempting to shoot someone). The Indians, however, are in a state of perpetual dancing. The European-Americans, standing erect, are more robust, radiating seriousness and superiority. The “savages,” on the other hand, are involved in tomfoolery insofar as they appear to be dancing, lacking the seriousness of the soldiers. None of the “Indians” are standing erect regardless of whether they are in an “action pose” or not. This representation depicts them as inferior and marginalized.

A few things can be suggested about how the lack of women on both sides appears to feminize the “Indians.” This motif is not surprising when compared with the way that women are depicted in Western art conventions that requires feminization in order to make men “masculine.” It is possible that the “Indians” become marginalized, and feminized through their lack of erect posture insofar as women have been conventionally depicted as undulating in their postures (see Wiber 1997 for a detailed discussion of the connection between erect men and undulating women in Western art conventions). The only thing that the two groups seem to share is horses, which are not color-coded and do not vary in composition from side-to-side.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE “FORT APACHE” MYTH: A RADICAL APPROACH

The toy “Fort Apache” has little or nothing to do with the historic Fort Apache, the history of Arizona, or the various Apache nations that it relies on for similitude. Many of the visual aspects of “Fort Apache” have no historical basis and attempt to naturalize a complex situation into simple oppositions. Women and children are missing and the various motifs used to depict the people, especially the Apaches, rely on pan-Aboriginal interpretations of First Nations people. This is why there is a totem pole, head dresses, and various other symbolic images that have come to define pan-aboriginal identity. It can be assumed that the only aspect of the depiction of Apache warriors that is supported by historical evidence, the strong use of archery, was used because of its pan-aboriginal symbolism. The depiction of soldiers also misses the nuance of the historical situation: all of the soldiers are represented as European-American even though a large portion of historical Fort Apache’s manpower came from recruited Apache scouts, Pima Indians, and Mexican desperadoes/mercenaries. The nuance that defines Arizona’s history is ignored to simplify the toy into the opposition of “Cowboys and Indians,” even though there were no “Cowboys” at Fort Apache! The design of the fort itself is also a distortion of reality insofar as it is safely guarded by a stockade that never existed in Fort Apache and was rare in Arizona’s arid climate. This stockade is the most telling aspect of how First Nations people were viewed by European-American toy makers: the Indians are beyond the pale, and this separation is not subtle. The wall that separates the European-Americans and the “Indians” is not invisible and connotes an inside/outside relationship that conforms to the history of Western philosophy, colonialism, and cultural theory where the “savage” lives in an impossible relation to civilization, unable to move out of the state of savagry for whatever reason. The European-American toy makers do

not allow for a separation between Apaches, Indians, and savages, instead relying on myth and simulation in order to present reality. The stockade that has no historical basis creates a physical separation between savagry and civilization; “Cowboys” are inside, while “Indians” are outside.

The imagery in “Fort Apache” has become naturalized through the “realism” of the simulation, and thus mythologized. Yet, this sort of simulation would not be as immediately successful in distorting reality without the success of photography and cinematography in communicating images so broadly and rapidly. It is the recurrence of the simulation that gives power to the myth.

Already a radical approach to image-based research is unfolding. The examples of the litigation surrounding the Washington Redskins and of the “Fort Apache” toy suggests that a “Cowboy and Indian” myth is taking place in a variety of media. At this point statements about why this has occurred cannot be made. It is only possible to suggest that it is happening in a preliminary, symbolic way. A fully developed, mythologized history has yet to be demonstrated despite the symbolic similarities between the abovementioned examples. In order to approach the question of why these symbolic constructs appear to be participating in a myth-building process, this thesis suggests a radical approach that combines semiotics and Baudrillard’s simulacra. The shortcoming of relying on a strictly Baudrillardian approach is that simulacra only involves the ability for an object to be mass-produced to the point where the original (whether it is a reel of film or the prototype of a new invention) is usurped by the copies. Baudrillard’s position only takes account of objects and technology, and is ontological in scope, whereas Barthes’ emphasis on myth is strictly epistemological insofar as it takes account of ideas. The simulacra is an ontological form of “mimesis,” a concept that has

been debated by philosophers since Plato first developed it in his *Republic* (Plato 1997). Mythology, on the other hand, is an epistemological form of mimesis. Prior to a full discussion of how I plan to use this approach it is useful to make some statements about mimesis.

Plato formulated mimesis in his aphorism of the “Divided Line,” his most famous explanation of the pure “Forms.” Forms are the absolute original of any concept or thing. Because humans have no access to the original and only access to the idea of the original, we are in a constant state of being bombarded by images that are interpretations or representations of the Form. These mimics are always imperfect but there is a hierarchy to imperfections with the “Good” (the Form of all Forms) being at the top; the Forms are below the Good; and so on. The lowest category in this hierarchy is an image of a physical creation. Plato uses the example of a bed to demonstrate this phenomenon in his *Republic*: here, an artisan crafts a bed based on his idea (Form) of what a bed is. The bed is an imperfect representation of the original referent. After the bed is completed a painter paints a picture of the same bed (Plato 1997:596a–e). This painting is an imitation of an imitation and is thus of a lower order. The imitation is not false but is the most deluded form of truth and is akin to Plato’s most famous allegory, “The Cave,” because this representation of a representation is what captives in “The Cave” experience when they see shadows dancing on the cave wall. This entire process is what philosophers of aesthetics have come to call mimesis. Mimesis is the process of making copies that further distance us from the Good and the Forms.

This short explanation of Plato’s mimesis demonstrates that in and of itself Baudrillard’s simulacrum does not necessitate myth. Instead, it creates a world of copies. A copy is not a myth per se, but an inadequate representation of something else.

Representations are not always myths, but myths are always representations. Simulacra are useful when dealing with myth because they allow for a mythologist to address myth diachronically by examining material culture and historical consciousness simultaneously. This is somewhat lacking in Barthes' *Mythologies* (1972). Of the twenty-eight examples of myth that Barthes provides, all are synchronic. If a myth distorts history by naturalizing it, it is reasonable to suggest that a diachronic approach that addresses the historical path of the myth is necessary for demystification. The interplay of simulation and myth is only the beginning of potential inquiry and we need to move from looking at examples of simulation and myth to an understanding of why simulation and myth occur. A diachronic study is needed to gain context, to understand if and why the "apotheosis" of "Cowboys and Indians" has taken place. Apotheosis is a concept that has a variety of meanings, but its use throughout the rest of this thesis will rely on one connotation found in the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*: the way in which heroes undergo apotheosis in order to become gods. This is not explicitly the use that I intend, but the connotation is similar: in apotheosis a character becomes a god only when he or she becomes mythologized. I am not suggesting that "Cowboys" or "Indians" have become gods in the process of myth-building. Instead, I will use the word as a synonym for the "process of mythologizing a character" because there is no word for this process in the English language other than "apotheosis."

I have two intentions in using an approach that combines semiotics and simulacra: to describe the various developments in the history of "Cowboy and Indian" entertainment; and to explain this history in terms of social-political world that produced it. The following diachronic example is one possible interpretation of the past and should be viewed only as an interpretation. The historical connections that I point out, however,

are not arbitrary, nor are they coincidental. Instead, they should be viewed as puzzle pieces that help form a complex whole that is the simulated myth of the “Cowboy and Indian.”

CHAPTER 4: A DIACHRONIC EXAMINATION OF “COWBOY AND INDIAN” ENTERTAINMENT

BUFFALO BILL CODY’S *WILD WEST SHOW*

After warring Apache factions were dispelled from Arizona in 1886, the “American Frontier” underwent a transition. As the government pushed for control of the Mexican border, placed “unruly” Native Americans on reservations, and began to deal with rampant vigilantism in the American southwest, the frontier lifestyle rapidly disappeared. The increase of railways in the central and western United States opened up communications, making travel easier. This led to increased populations in many states and territories. With the railroad came revitalization of an ancient industry: the circus.⁷ The standard circus employed acrobats, zoological expeditions, clowns, and sideshows, but a second type of circus also flourished, the *Wild West Show*, the most successful of which was *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show* (Davis 2002).

William Cody’s father, Isaac Cody, a Kansas liberal, actively fought for the equality of slaves and First Nations people. Kansas was a pro-slavery state and the liberal attitude of the Cody family led to Isaac Cody being stabbed while giving an anti-slavery speech. He never recovered from his injuries, dying in 1857 (Cody Wetmore 1903:2). William Cody would maintain his livelihood as a frontiersman until 1883 when he created *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show* as a remedy for a lack of frontier work (Davis 2002:21–2). As his *Wild West Show* toured North America over the next twenty years it became a moving extravaganza, including as many as 1200 performers at its peak.

⁷ Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey (RBBB) are credited with being the first company to employ the use of circus trains and hundreds of other circuses prospered similarly by the 1890s (Davis 2002).

Visitors to this spectacle could see main events, feats of skill, staged races and sideshows. Many authentic western personalities were part of the show. Cody used “real” Cowboys and “real” Native Americans. His best performers were well known in their own right: people like Annie Oakley and Frank Butler put on shooting exhibitions; and Sitting Bull and a band of twenty braves appeared in the show. Other well known contemporaries such as “Calamity” Jane and “Wild Bill” Hickok toured at one time or another. Even Geronimo would make a rare appearance (Davis 2002:75–77).

What is significant about Cody’s circus is that it became a refuge for First Nations people and “Cowboys” alike at a time when both cultural and economic groups had become so marginalized that they no longer had any purpose outside of being spectacles. A once complex situation that consisted of warring factions was now forced to coexist as travelling entertainment for an increasingly wealthy European-American audience. It is here that the narrativization of the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition can be traced: for the first time the frontier was entertainment, not a nasty political situation. As Cody travelled from town to town via circus trains, he brought the world to masses of people, albeit a fictional fantasy world that played on nostalgia. For Cody, unlike P.T. Barnum, there was a great deal at stake: without his *Wild West Shows* (and copycat groups) his way of life would disappear. It is no coincidence that *Wild West Shows* faded into oblivion during the 1920s with the appearance of radio serials and Hollywood cinema: the spectator no longer actively engaged with the spectacle because it could be experienced at home with the radio or the cinema. During the Depression the *Wild West Shows* would disappear.

DIMESTORE “COWBOYS AND INDIANS”

Despite its success, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* did not generate any (contemporary) toys, though Schoenhut, a company that made wooden dolls and pianos made a fortune during the first two decades of the 20th Century with its “Humpty Dumpty’s Circus.” Humpty Dumpty was a celebrity clown from the RBBB, for which the toy line is named (O’Brien 1990:74–5). In contrast, “Cowboys and Indians” did not make the transition to toys until the last years of the Depression. During the 1930s, radio serials and comics strips reached the height of their popularity (as inexpensive forms of entertainment), with many successful Cowboy characters⁸ such as *Red Ryder*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Buck Jones*, and *Buzz Barton* being endorsed by BB Gun companies such as Daisy,⁹ Hubley, and Kilgore (O’Brien 1990:145, 150). These guns were not profitable until after the United States joined World War Two, and the representation of “Cowboys and Indians” was not as explicit as it was in the other popular boy-oriented toys of the Depression, “Dimestore Soldiers.” During this decade various companies (such as Auburn, and J. Edward Jones) produced “Dimestore Soldiers.” These toys were incredibly small and were made from lead (although one company, Bergen Toy and Novelty Co., produced plastic ones) (O’Brien 1990:125). Toys depicting the opposition of “Cowboys and Indians” were first mass-marketed at this time, the poorest decade in the United States in the 20th Century, when nostalgia for the past developed in children’s toys. Before then, toys imitated technological achievements and gluttony, with the most

⁸ With “real” frontier Cowboys and “Wild West” shows virtually extinct, the symbolism of the frontier continued on, but now as fiction with the “Cowboy” as protagonist and the “Indian” as antagonist. During the 1930s there was a transition from an emphasis on historical figures to fictional characters.

⁹ These BB Guns were the things that young boys supposedly dreamed about getting for Christmas during the 1930s and 1940s, and this iconographic characteristic is central to a well know Christmas movie. In the film *A Christmas Story*, the plot revolves around a young boy, Ralphie, trying to convince his family to buy him a “Red Ryder Carbine-Action Two-Hundred-Shot Range Model Air Rifle BB gun with a compass in the stock and a thing, which tells time” (Clark 1983).

successful boy-oriented toys of first three decades of the 20th Century being steel and tin airplanes and trains (and also the abovementioned Humpty Dumpty Circus) (O'Brien 1990:173–83).

AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

By the 1950s the American economy had recovered and toy manufacturers returned to more expensive materials (such as tin) with many companies relying heavily on plastic for the first time. The United States in general was beginning to regain the affluence that it had at the beginning of the twentieth century and a number of “Cowboy Entertainers” emerged. Many toy companies attempted to merchandise toys based on these popular “Cowboy Entertainers,” but the most lucrative contracts always belonged to Marx Toys, who produced various motorized tin toys based on *Howdy Doody*, *Hopalong Cassidy*, and *Roy Rogers* (O'Brien 1990:173). It wasn't until Marx Toys acquired the licenses to Walt Disney, however, that the “Cowboy and Indian” playset was developed. By 1955, Marx was releasing complex tin and plastic playsets based on *Zorro*, *Davy Crockett*, *Roy Rogers*, and *Rin Tin Tin* (all owned or licensed by Disney) (Horowitz 1992:64–5; O'Brien 1990:182). As televisions began to proliferate in American homes (with programs such as *Bonanza* (Hamilton 1959), *Gunsmoke* (Meston 1955), and *Maverick* (Huggins 1957) being very lucrative), the genre was maintained (O'Brien 1990:198). The success of the Disney playsets led Marx to create “Civil War” and “Cowboy and Indian” playsets. The first of these, “Fort Apache Stockade with Five Famous Americans,” was released in 1955 (Horowitz 1992:88; Marx Toys Patent #3616 and #3616SD). It is notable that the five “Famous Americans” were Buffalo Bill Cody, Sitting Bull, Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, and General George Custer, none of whom had

anything to do with the historical Fort Apache. Thus, in the toy's first manifestation, the history of Fort Apache was already being distorted to make room for historical celebrities. The fact that Sitting Bull, leader of the Hunkpapa Sioux, is included instead of actual Apache heroes (such as Cochise or Geronimo) is not explained. What can be inferred from this example is that by the 1950s actual history had been abandoned for the sake of an all-encompassing identity that allowed a showman (Buffalo Bill) to be equated with American *Civil War* campaign leaders (Carson and Custer) and Daniel Boone, who died long before the others were born. The simple opposition of "Cowboys and Indians" that was used by Buffalo Bill and his band of entertainers to maintain an obsolete way of life was now so distorted that a group of historical and fictional characters could come together in a historical-fictional space. This is an example of the apotheosis of "Cowboy and Indian" entertainment.

By the late 1960s the toy industry was once again in transition, but now because plastics were becoming so inexpensive that larger toys could be made. With Hasbro's G.I. Joe, the "action figure" took shape and other companies scrambled to develop similar toys. Marx Toys attempted to profit on Hasbro's success by releasing its own twelve-inch line of action figures: the Fort Apache Fighters. These toys revolved around the same location as the other Marx toys, but for the first time fiction and history became inseparable. The toy line focused on the fictional Johnny West and his family who lived at the Fort Apache Ranch, and their archenemy, Mexican desperado Sam Cobra. In order to fight Cobra and maintain his ranch, West would call upon friends such as Geronimo, Cochise, and General Custer. Even Canadian RCMP officer Sam Steele was introduced into the line. Along with these historic characters, there was a generic Indian, an Indian

princess (named Princess Wildflower), and an African American farmhand named Jed Gibson.

SPACE AND TIME

It is useful here to mention David Harvey's theorization of space-time as a means of adding depth to the demystification of the "Cowboy and Indian" opposition. For Harvey, space and time are social constructs that are fundamentally intertwined (Harvey 1996:110). Even though space and time may be "facts of nature," we cannot know what those facts are outside of our own cultural embeddedness in language and belief systems (Harvey 1996:111). In this way space and time are very similar to the semiotic myth. Harvey outlines four ways in which time and space are constructed by any society (Harvey 1996:210–12):

1. Social constructions of space and time are not wrought out of thin air, but shaped out of the various forms of space and time which human beings encounter in their struggle for material survival, for example, night and day, the seasons, and lifecycles in the animal and plant world.
2. Conceptions of space and time depend equally upon cultural, metaphorical, and intellectual skills. The rise of "deep time," the idea that there is no sign of a beginning and no prospect of an end, for example, as described by geologist James Hutton in 1788 was fueled by metaphor as much as it was by observations of rocks and outcrops.
3. Social constructions of space and time operate with the full force of objective facts to which all individuals and institutions necessarily respond. For example, in

modern societies we accept clock time, even though such time is a social construct, as an objective fact of daily life.

4. Social definitions of objective space and time are implicated in processes of social reproduction. Representations of space and time arise out of the world of social practices but then become a form of regulation of those practices, defining gender roles, hierarchies, and divisions of labor.

For Harvey, the construction of space and time is nowhere more evident than in the expansion of capitalism through colonialism (Harvey 1996:224). Harvey uses the European settlement of North America as an example: the imposition of alien (European) conceptions of space and time upon indigenous populations altered forever the social framework within which the reproduction of these people could take place (Harvey 1996:222). In this example, space and time undergo a radical social transformation due to the imposition of alien concepts in what Harvey calls “external force” (Harvey 1996:222). It is easy to view “external force” as something that can occur in a variety of contexts. The type of “external force” that Harvey is interested in, however, is one where space-time constructs undergo a complete transformation due to external domination; the dominated group no longer has the power to define its space-time reality (Harvey 1996:222).

CAPITALISM AND COMMODITY FETISHISM

Harvey’s theoretical orientation (much like Barthes’) is Marxist in nature and for this reason he is always addressing capitalism. For Harvey, the material demands of capitalism are the root of imposed space-time constructions. This conceptualization of capitalism is complex because of its diachronic emphasis. Here, manufactured products

are not only the result of capitalism, but also the result of colonialism, or “external force.” This interplay is easy to identify in any product employing the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition. The Fort Apache-based toy is an excellent example of this interplay: the toy is not merely the creation of a company (in this case Marx Toys), but also represents the complex history of European colonization and the implementation of Western time-space construction. This capitalist direction is important because it implies that time-space constructions are objective, conscious decisions made by those who have authority via wealth. This also implies that a consumer’s decision to buy particular products is wrapped up in a consumer’s relationship to (and acceptance of) the construction of space and time.

How is it possible to understand the social and objective processes of space-time construction? Harvey’s solution is to employ a “historical materialist” approach where the investigator begins with products in order to work backwards in time to find the historical bases for capitalist behavior. The idea of “commodity fetishism” is at the heart of historical materialism. Commodity fetishism is best understood as the way that markets conceal information and relations (Marx 2004:71–83). Harvey, and elsewhere, Cronon, have used site-catchments analysis to demonstrate that the most concealed aspect of any product (from grapes to textiles) is where it is made (Cronon 1991:340; Harvey 1996:232–3). For this reason, Harvey claims that the most important aspect of commodity fetishism is geography. But what happens when we know where the product is made, but a fictional-historical space is simulated in the product? That is, how is it possible to talk about commodity fetishism when a product has its own space-time dimension? What about the suggestion that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition has its own space-time dimension?

SPACE-TIME COMPRESSION

The ease and frequency with which people, goods, and especially information overcome great distances due to changes in space-time dimensionality is what Harvey has called “time-space compression.” This is experienced when rapid changes in communications or transportation occur, forcing us to re-evaluate our notions of space and time (Harvey 1996:243). Harvey’s example is the invention and rapid implementation of the railroad in North America and Europe, and how this created an overwhelming sense of foreboding and collapse that has forced people to rethink space-time dimensionality, something that can be identified in modern literature. I have suggested the importance of trains for understanding how the nasty political situation in the American Southwest became traveling entertainment via *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show* at the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century (Davis 2002). The railroad may have contributed to making the frontier lifestyle obsolete because of its ability to make communications and capitalist expansion easier (through a transcendence of time and space), but simultaneously may have allowed for the revitalization of this lifestyle through its ability to collapse time and space geographically in order to create entertainment. Here, the *Wild West Show* has its own space-time dimensionality through its ability to transcend time and space as traveling entertainment.

The invention of the radio and the cinema can be viewed as a further constraint. By the 1920s, it was not necessary to go to the circus to be entertained: the radio allowed many people to be entertained on their own time within the comfort of their homes, and the cinema was (at least in urban centers) accessible on a daily basis. The circus, on the other hand, may only come a few times a year, if at all (depending on whether or not your town was on a rail route).

What is important about this compression is that once it begins it cannot stop. There appears to be a correlation between compression via the railroad and the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition. This is most likely due to commodification via the circus. The circus allowed for the continuation of the frontier lifestyle in a spurious way. After the once authentic “Cowboys and Indians” aged, retired, and died, the simulated opposition continued as a product, with the product, not the original becoming the authoritative referent (a process similar to simulacra). The circus attractions were no longer authentic but were in themselves products. Here, it appears that space-time compression naturalizes the myth by distorting reality in favor of a false relationship between the audience and the subject.

SPACE-TIME COMPRESSION IN MARX’S “FORT APACHE”

By the time that Marx’s “Fort Apache Playset with Five Famous Americans” was brought into American homes, historical celebrities Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Buffalo Bill Cody, Sitting Bull, and General George Custer were being simulated in a way that compressed space and time. The entire history of the American Southwest was being represented by five historical figures from different periods and places residing in a historical space with which they had no real connection. Most of the five historical celebrities had no connection to one another (except Custer and Sitting Bull at *The Battle of the Little Bighorn*, and Cody and Sitting Bull during their circus years) outside of their connection to the idea of “Cowboys and Indians.” Boone, for example, died before the others were born, and none of the historical celebrities had any connection to Fort Apache.

There are two forms of space-time compression that permeate the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition in toys. First, there is a space-time compression as outlined by Harvey, where all of a sudden the ability to interact with “Cowboys and Indians” and Arizona is completely at a child’s leisure (more so than via radio, cinema, or television). The playset and figures can be played with at home individually without any other media. Here, Arizona and the Western genre are always in the child’s possession regardless of where that child lives. A second type of space-time compression is also occurring, where the complex history of a nasty political situation is compressed into a single playset that transcends time and space. Simultaneously, then, from the beginning of “Cowboy and Indian” toys (from guns and “Dimestore Soldiers” to Marx’s Fort Apache-related depictions such as Johnny West), there is a dual creation of time and space. This duality is based upon distorting historic events in favor of creating a new history, and the ability to distribute this history to children in rapid ways because of continuous developments in communications and transportation. Space-time compression is a necessary piece of the puzzle for addressing any simulated myth: apotheosis cannot occur without the distortion of time and/or space.

OPPOSITION AND COMPETITION: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BIG BUSINESS, SPORTS, AND STATE BUILDING

The Washington Redskins example shows that sports trademarks fit into the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, but this is only one subtype of imagery that can be found in the world of sports. The NFL has the Minnesota Vikings, and the National Basketball Association (NBA) has the Boston Celtics. Is this derogatory? What about various kinds of animals? Animals such as the Hamilton Tiger Cats and the BC Lions of

the CFL are abundant in sport trademarks. Are these counter examples to the argument, or are they a symptom of some larger process?

There are two things that connect these insignia: all have heavy implications of competitiveness, and all are derogated groups insofar as they have been manipulated and made inferior over time because of the categorical orderings of North American society. Like the “Cowboy and Indian” myth that this thesis has been tracing, it can be expected that all of these other images are distortions that are participating in the metalanguage of myth. According to Whatmore, animals of all kinds have had a special derogated significance in the Western world through simultaneously being displayed and embodied as “wild” through the categories that we impose on them (Whatmore 2002:9–11).

Whatmore attempts to trace the history of animal categorization from the Roman era to the present, claiming that the way that animals are categorized as wild, exotic, and competitive reveal more about the society making the categories than the animals themselves (Whatmore 2002:9–11). She uses the example of the Roman *ludi circenses*, circuses in which the main event was chariot racing, but also included *venationes* (wild animal combats) (Whatmore 2002:16–8). These wild animal combats were so successful that an entire industry of “staging the wild” was created in Rome to the point where amphitheatres became the “focal point and public face of elaborate networks of people and animals mobilized by military conquest, political patronage, administrative taxation, legal or judicial ruling, and commercial trade” (Whatmore 2002:18). Here, the Roman obsession with “exotic” animals contributed to the development of an elaborate trade system that was necessary for obtaining “exotic” creatures for use in *venationes*.

Whatmore’s point is that animals always seem to be categorized and fetishized through the notion of “wilderness,” something that is a relative concept at best: wild and exotic

become inseparable concepts but exoticism is something that only has any meaning based on a personal or societal-geographical level. Whatmore's focus on trade networks leads her to claim that geographical spaces are hybrid networks of people, places, and things that become distorted through categorizations of wilderness/exoticism.

The useful cocktail of competition, exoticism, and the wild is always expressing itself in trademarks, a relationship that has permeated trademarks since their inception. For example, an early handbook targeting companies confused or intimidated about trademarks was entitled *Trademark Power: An Expedition into an Unprobed and Inviting Wilderness* (Buck 1916). The title of this handbook is an example of a larger process: exoticized groups are not only the subjects of trademarks, but are fundamental in apotheosis if they are core aspects of brands, which I have suggested are ultimate signs. Exoticism is so important an aspect of trademarks that during their inception in the United States the *Albany Law Journal* suggested that foreign words, words in dead languages, and terms and images from areas of the world not empirically (but presumably mythically) known in the local market promised to be the best markers for a manufacturer's wares. A statement from the same journal article highlights this point: "Exoticism renders trademarks merely arbitrary designations for the sake of distinction" (Trade-Marks 1875:171). For Coombe, it is because of this emphasis on myth creation by lawmakers that, images with perceived exotic qualities such as Indians, Eskimos, children (especially twins), animals, and climates (the jungle or the arctic), figure prominently as trademarks (Coombe 1996:211).

The fetishization of the "exotic" is central to Taussig's notion of "the magic of the state," where the Spirit Queen (a fictional character whom the reader is led to believe is having a conversation with Taussig) says that the "European Elsewhere has here

perfected the European ideal” (Taussig 1997:7). Throughout this book, Taussig suggests that in the process of state building (the creation of a nation), the conquered become a mythologized (and often demonized) “Other” on which the success of the nation’s self-image is based. Without these “Others” the state has nothing to compare itself to. Here, mythologized histories contribute to the formation of a nation’s identity. This suggests that “Cowboys and Indians” are only one example of a potentially infinite number of debased persons, places, and/or things that have become central in the identities of nations worldwide. The “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is regionally significant in the North American setting, but there are an abundance of other peoples (African Americans) and animals (alligators, buffalo, etc.) that have also been debased in this region.

But scholars such as Taussig, Coombe, and Whatmore only focus on these debased groups of humans and animals and ignore a crucial aspect of this “magic of the state:” authoritative figures are also simulated in ways that are central to myth building, as suggested in the examples of the *Battle of the Alamo* and the *Battle of Little Bighorn* (see Chapter 2). This could explain why many trademarks are branded with self-obsessed heroic Cowboy imagery. Marlboro cigarettes (the Marlboro Man), Rustler Pepperoni, the Dallas Cowboys of the NFL, and the Saskatchewan Rough Riders and Calgary Stampeders of the CFL are only a few examples. “Cowboys vs. Indians” is a concept that has littered the North American landscape from sports teams to tobacco and beyond. Does this mean that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is only one example of a process that debased persons, places, and/or things undergo in trademarks? Why are authoritative figures also simulated in trademarks? Do members of the dominant

European-American/Canadian society question the “Cowboy and Indian” based trademarks that have contributed to American and Canadian national identities?

DEMYSTIFICATION IS NOT ENOUGH

According to Barthes (1972:128) there are three ways in which people engage myths: first, as a producer of myths; second, as a mythologist, or a person who deciphers myth and understands distortions; and finally, as a reader of myths, a person who lives the myth as a story at once true and unreal. The first two types of engagement are analytic insofar as they destroy the myth, either by making its intention obvious, or by unmasking it (Barthes 1972:128). The third type is not analytic insofar as the reader of myths consumes the myth without reflection.

Until now the focus of this thesis has been demystification, an exercise in deconstruction. By identifying that a myth is being simulated in the synchronic examples of the Washington Redskin litigation (see Chapter 2), “Fort Apache” as produced by Marx Toys (see Chapter 3), and the diachronic interpretation of the history of “Cowboy and Indian” entertainment (in this chapter) a radical approach towards demystification has been proposed, one that considers both semiotic myth and postmodern ontology as being necessary aspects of any apotheosis. Space-time compression and the role of capitalism in the apotheosis of simulated myths (in general) have also been considered. The problem with this approach is that in and of itself it can only unmask a myth and does not allow for the investigator to understand how a myth is being read. Who are these readers of myth and are they taking the myth as real?

As stated in the first chapter, the purpose of this thesis is to assess whether or not people are viewing the “Cowboy and Indian” myth as objective truth. In order for this to

take place it has been suggested that a reader of the myth must lack a critical gaze. This is an important aspect of an investigation into mythology that is lacking in Barthes' *Mythologies*: Barthes only focuses on the act of demystification in his twenty-eight examples of myth in French society. He does not present a means of deciphering whether or not people actually take the myth as fact. Instead, he assumes that the myth must be taken as fact, not only for it to have any power over people, but for it to merely exist. For this reason, the next two chapters will be an exercise in determining whether or not myth is being read as objective truth. The purpose is twofold: first, a new approach to analyzing myth is utilized by addressing the general public that is supposed to accept the myth as fact; second, it will be determined whether or not the myth of the "Cowboy and Indian" has any power over these supposed readers of myth. If it does, then Barthes' understanding of myth is supported. If it doesn't then what does this mean for mythologists who analyze semiotic myths?

CHAPTER 5: THE FOCUS GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the first of two research projects conducted in Fredericton in order to assess whether or not depictions of “Cowboys and Indians” are being read as objective truth. The first project should be seen as a means of developing the second project insofar as the categories and images used in the blind test were developed and selected based on responses to questions made by focus-group participants. Due to the amount of data to be presented and analyzed, the two projects will be discussed in separate chapters.

FOCUS-GROUP METHODOLOGIES

The first research project, the focus group, explores reactions to how participants interpret exoticism and competition/aggression in sports trademarks. The data I was interested in is how and why young Canadians interpret trademarks. In this focus group participants were given an opportunity to discuss what they thought was necessary for a successful sports brand. Participants were found via quota sampling. In quota sampling, the investigator decides on the subpopulations of interest from the broader universe defined as relevant by your research questions (Bernard 2002:181–2). Here, interviewers choose members of the sample on the spot in order to fill the previously determined quota (Bernard 2002:181–2). Quota sampling is a useful method for this project because of time and resource constraints that made probability sampling impractical, as this requires a greater number of participants and a random sample (Bernard 2002:148–52). The population of interest for the focus group was young Canadian undergraduates

(preferably in their freshman or sophomore year) who had spent most (or all) of their lives living in Canada. This subpopulation was of interest because it was assumed that they would not have developed a “critical gaze,” have a difficult time identifying the abovementioned “distortions of reality,” and make suggestions for a brand based on an inability to grasp these distortions. Mature students and students from other countries were not be used in the focus group (or blind test; see Chapter 6). The former had a higher possibility of having developed a “critical gaze” and the latter would not necessarily have been exposed to this regionally specific myth in the same way as people reared in Canada. It is important to note this subpopulation of interest was only a sample of what Pelto and Pelto (1978:129) call the “universe of interest.” The universe of interest is the delimited population (of people, events, or other units) from which a sample is to be drawn (Pelto and Pelto 1978:129). Here, the universe of interest was “Canadians,” but because of the small sample size only statements about the subpopulation of interest (young Canadian university students in Fredericton, New Brunswick) can be made. This subpopulation is important because many trademarks target young men and women.

The purpose of these focus groups was to explore whether and how young Canadians critically interpret the exoticized and/or aggressive/competitive elements of trademarks. This was achieved through asking the following questions:

1. Have you ever played any team sports? (If yes) What sports have you played?
When in your life did you play them?
2. Are you currently involved in team sports? (If yes) What sports do you play?
Where? And in what capacity (do you play, coach, referee, etc.)?
3. Have you always felt comfortable with your teams’ name? Why?

4. Given the chance, how would you name a sports franchise? Why?
5. Have you ever thought about creating a sports logo? What would this logo be?
Why do you think that it is a good logo?
6. What do you think is necessary for a successful team name and logo? Why?
7. Do you think that men's team names and logos are more aggressive than women's team names and logos? Vice-versa? Do you notice a difference? Why?
8. What do you think would cause a name or logo to be unsuccessful? Why?
9. What do you think about names like the "Washington Redskins" or "Cleveland Indians?" Are these potentially harmful to indigenous people? Or do you think that they are good names? Why?
10. Do you see any similarities between how Cowboys and Indians are depicted in sports logos/mascots?

Open-ended questions are more useful than close-ended ones because they allow each respondent to give any type of answer that he or she desires and to elaborate on this if they wish (Pelto and Pelto 1978:81). Open-ended questions were necessary in this project for two reasons: they made it possible to obtain a wide variety of reactions from respondents; and responses were shaped by what respondents considered to be important rather than by the categories provided by interviewers (Pelto and Pelto 1978:81). Since the project relied on the interpretation of myth, most of the questions were open-ended, with the exception of the initial questions, which were necessary for understanding the participants' background in sports, something that should not be open to interpretation. What is important about these answers is the light they shed on whether (and how) elements of competition and exoticization were seen as being necessary for developing a successful sports brand.

Two focus groups were interviewed: one made up entirely of men and another made up entirely of women. A female graduate student assisted this project by coordinating the female focus group. I coordinated the male focus group. Focus groups were held in the Department of Anthropology at UNB, Fredericton in December 2006.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY¹⁰

Locating participants proved difficult: some flyers were posted in the city without any response, and when approached, most undergraduates declined the invitation to participate. Only six volunteers (three men and three women) participated in the focus group. One third of people interviewed (one man, one woman) had never played sports in any capacity. The remaining two thirds of interviewees had played sports as teenagers, but not as adults. All participants were reared in Canada, and all were of European Canadian descent. One male participant, however, had been brought up on a reservation. All participants were undergraduates at St. Thomas University or the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. Participants came from a variety of different liberal arts disciplines including English, Religious Studies, Anthropology, and Psychology.

Many answers received in both interviews were consistent from one focus group to another. The following section will discuss the significant consistencies and digressions from both focus groups.

When asked if they had always felt comfortable with their team's names, and how they would construct a new logo or team name if given the opportunity, female participants did not brainstorm new brands because they felt that their high school team names (Warrior, Chiefs, Hornets, and Spartans) were satisfactory due to popularity or to

¹⁰ A summary of the highlights from the focus groups will be given because of the length of the transcripts.

some special individual meaning that they attached to them. One participant questioned the value of “Warrior-type” names because “It’s all about power.” Otherwise, she agreed with the other participants.

Male participants viewed their previous team’s names differently (no names were given), claiming that they were “kind of silly at times” because they rely on “abstract concepts.” One participant said that sports team names seem “kind of arbitrary.” Another participant mentioned that he would have felt better about his team’s names if they had contained more alliteration¹¹ or had some regional significance. He said, “...It would be nice if they did relate somehow to the region of which the team is actually in.” An important tangent about regionalism ensued for some time before the male focus group agreed on the issue. One male participant had some quarrel with regionalism because of a fear of corporate interest and a roster filled with international players giving an illusion of regionalism. He said, “...Sports teams are funded by massive amounts of international capital, and to say that sports is a grassroots, community based organization is bullshit! The home team is mostly composed of international players traded around.” This tangent continued into the answers for many of the follow-up questions, but was solved when one participant mentioned that despite the potential for the illusion of community, the community itself is who pays to see the games, therefore giving the community an important role in the continuation of the team’s success. He said:

Well I have to say that I think that incorporating regionalism has to be something that they do that’s almost essential. No matter how many international players, or people from anywhere else, who are traded and are actually on the team [it does not matter because] it is still the people in the community that are going to bring the revenue into the event. And who is going to build the stadiums—is going to keep the team going?

¹¹ According to the *Oxford Compact English Dictionary*, alliteration is a literary device used to make sentences flow well in prose. In alliteration, most words in a sentence start with the same letter.

Without those people, no matter how much corporate sponsorship they have, if there's no crowd, there's no team, right? So you need something that the people can rally around and feel united with, and that they can actually relate to.

All male participants also agreed that many team names are too common or too similar to one another, therefore lacking originality, making it difficult to relate to at a local level.

Two supposed CFL teams, the Calgary "Roughriders" and the Saskatchewan "Roughriders" were given as examples. This is interesting because the Calgary team is known as the "Stampeders" and the participants confused this with another CFL team, the Ottawa "Rough Riders." Despite this mix-up, it is still a valid point.

As mentioned above, the female participants would not discuss alternative sports team names or logos. The male participants expressed disappointment towards sports team logos because of their reliance on animal, historical, and/or cultural symbolism. For example, disappointment was expressed towards the use of birds in professional baseball and hockey team names and logos (such as the Bluejays, Penguins, Orioles, and Ducks), once again due to a lack of regionalism.

When asked what would make a team name or logo successful the male participants agreed that two characteristics are necessary for success in the world of athletics: simplicity and aggression. One participant focused heavily on simplicity saying, "Simplicity is a must, something simple, to the point. I think [that sports are] quite visceral. You want to keep it simple—easy to identify with—you need something that you don't need to think about much." Statements such as, "they must be empowering" and "they must continue the athletic stereotype of aggressiveness" were made in support of aggression.

The use of the term “warrior” was agreed upon by both focus groups as being a successful name. The men claimed that its aggressive connotations are necessary for success, and two of the three female participants felt that they could not come up with a better name than “warrior.”

All participants were hesitant to respond to the question of whether or not male sports team names and logos are more aggressive than female ones. Not a single participant could name a female sports team name or logo. Both focus groups contributed this issue to a lack of media coverage or popularity. The men dismissed this issue very quickly, claiming that the lack of interest in female sports is due to “it still being a man’s world,” and also because “they’re women.” The men did not touch upon this issue again. The female participants would continue to return to this issue throughout the remainder of the interview, making statements such as, “Sports aren’t feminine enough,” or claiming that, “Athletic women are tomboys.” They also criticized well-known female athletes such as tennis player Anna Kournikova, who according to one participant has never won a tournament despite being one of the highest paid professional tennis players.¹² The participants all seemed to have a deep knowledge about this particular tennis player, complaining that, “She is valued for her appearance, not her athletic ability.” One participant lamented, “No male could get away with this!”

When asked what would make a logo or name unsuccessful, female participants started to discuss some of the issues that the male participants had brought forth in answers to previous questions. The women agreed that two things could harm a logo or name’s success: names that go against the stereotype of male athletic aggression and

¹² This claim is only partially true: Anna Kournikova never won any major singles tournaments during her tennis career. She was, however, on a number of doubles teams that won major tournaments. [See *Anna Kournikova* (Farrington 2002; Issacson 2002)].

names that do not have geographical or regional significance. The men used this question to discuss issues of racism, suggesting that their gaze is more critical than had been anticipated. One male participant claimed that a name such as the “Harlem Niggers” would be unable to gain a following in our modern world. The participant who was raised on a reservation disagreed with this statement, saying “What about the Redskins?”¹³ The participants who did not have the experience of living in a First Nations community argued that names such as “Redskin” have been around for so long that they don’t matter. One participant said, “Yeah, but those are old team names. You couldn’t come up with a new team name like that and expect to get away with it.” The male participants also mentioned that “pansy or effeminate” names would be problematic because, “men want to be reassured that what they are doing is masculine.” One participant proposed that names that are too abstract, such as the “Minnesota Wild” (a team in the National Hockey League), might be problematic because they have the potential to be confusing. He said:

... Team names that are abstract concepts run the risk of being very unsuccessful. I know that the Minnesota Wild, the NHL team, [when] they were first formed people were like, you know, what the hell? What kind of name is that? Is it the simple act of being wild and free? It’s hard to identify with, I think for most ordinary people, [the people that] sports are geared towards, you know?

The abovementioned question about the “Washington Redskins” and “Cleveland Indians” led to some tense moments among the female participants. One participant said that, “[If] it’s not being directed at a particular person in a bad way that would have ramifications, [then] whatever.” A second participant said, “I think that it’s so

¹³ The fact that he mentioned the Washington Redskins was an interesting coincidence at this point in the focus group considering that the follow-up question on the interview schedule is “What do you think about names such as the ‘Washington Redskins’ or ‘Cleveland Indians?’ Are these potentially harmful to indigenous peoples?”

normalized... You just get used to stuff like that.” She went on to say that, “It’s not like [Indians] act like they used to anymore.” This upset the third participant, who said, “That’s a stereotype. I find that degrading.” The second participant then said, “I don’t take offense for them.” This was followed by a long pause, which prompted the moderator to ask a final question: “Do you think that these are good names?” The person who accused the other of using a stereotype said:

“I think they function to do what they want to do because they rely on stereotypes. If you want to have a successful team you have to have the jock image. And you’re just beginning the stereotype. It’s ideal if status is your thing and it must be working for these teams. It obviously functions for them, but whether I agree with it...”

This is another example of participants having a more critical gaze than was originally anticipated. The participant who had been accused of using a stereotype had responded differently, saying, “They aren’t what I would choose, but I mean, a long time ago when they picked those names they picked the name and named it. I came around a long time after and I’m female, so, that would be different.” Yet, this participant’s suggestion that these depictions have become normalized also suggests a critical gaze.

The male focus group responded to this question in a different way. The participant who grew up in a First Nations community led the discussion. He claimed that these names are especially harmful for indigenous peoples because they foster “external racism.” His concern was that, “The term ‘Indian’ has the potential to be turned into ‘In’jin’, which opens the door to other derogatory terms or slurs such as calling First Nations women ‘squaws.’” He pointed out that, “Indians come from India.” He went on to claim that this type of racism only works because indigenous people have no power in the United States and that it, “...doesn’t happen in Canada.” Someone brought up the

Edmonton Eskimos of the CFL, which he brushed aside because, “Maybe the Inuit don’t care or aren’t organized. They are the exception to the rule.” This was a surprisingly uncritical statement considering that this particular participant provided some of the most critical statements from either focus group.

I asked the male focus group a final question that was not asked of the female group:¹⁴ Do you see any similarities between how Cowboys and Indians are depicted in sports logos, names, and mascots? The initial response was that there are similarities between the two. One participant was quite critical in his response, saying: “They are both intangible caricatures, so maybe there are some Texans who are offended by Cowboys.” Another participant said, “Cowboys and Indians really have nothing to do with each other: the battles of children’s play are not representative of reality.” He justified this statement by claiming that, “The United States military hunted Indians, not Cowboys.” All of the participants agreed that this relationship, and similarly, the use of animals in logos, names, and mascots, is a form of (what the participant who grew up on the reservation called) “romanticized history.” One participant suggested that the logos themselves were less harmful than the aggressive behavior that sports necessitate. In the end, however, all male participants agreed that the use of terms “Redskin” and “Indian” are the most harmful because “People don’t get irate over [Cowboys and animals].”

FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS

The two most important results from the focus groups are:

1. Participants associated sports-related trademarks with aggression and exoticism.

¹⁴ Please note that this question was an afterthought as the female focus group was interviewed first.

2. All participants engaged in some critical thought. The most critical participants viewed the depiction of indigenous peoples in sports related trademarks as offensive and harmful, but agreed that these names and logos are effective. When asked, however, participants did not view “Cowboy” and animal related trademarks as offensive or harmful in the same way as “Indian” related trademarks, if at all.

The majority of people in both focus groups were able to point out (or at least hint towards) the distorted characteristics of the subject matter. The male focus group spent more time on this issue than the female focus group and this may be due to one male participant’s personal experience in growing up in a First Nations community. The answers received were not based on a male/female dichotomy as much as they were based on the knowledge, experience, and feelings of the particular participants. Based on this, I anticipated that the responses to the blind test would be consistent regardless of gender, and would rely on the personal experiences of participants.

Another compelling finding from the focus groups is that despite the fact that most respondents were able to engage with the topic in a critical way, the same respondents sometimes made some very uncritical statements. The most blatant example of this comes from a statement made by the man who was raised on a reservation. He stated that this type of stereotyping (he used the word “racism”) doesn’t happen in Canada. When another participant questioned this assertion because of the existence of the “Edmonton Eskimos” football team, he quickly brushed this problem aside without a solid justification. What is striking about this statement is that the person who had led the argument in a way that was critical was simultaneously engaging in a different myth, one where this type of thing does not happen in Canada.

In the blind test, participants were not able to use the knowledge or concerns of other participants as a springboard for discussion. This was necessary in order to avoid potential bias caused by one participant leading the others in the blind test (insofar as the participant who grew up in a First Nations community led most of the discussion in the focus group and potentially swayed the opinions of the other participants due to having more experience with the subject matter). As I will show in the next chapter, the blind test results and the focus group results are similar: each project illustrated that even though some participants were able to point out that the “Cowboy” is as much of a myth as the “Indian,” they did not see the “Cowboy” as being as significant as the Indian for a number of reasons that will be discussed at the end of Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: THE BLIND TESTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the blind test was to uncover how young Canadians interpret mythologized depictions of people, places, and things when they describe them (or they are described to them). The data of interest was whether or not participants would engage “distortions of reality” critically, and if so, in what way? Were participants uncritical in their descriptions of stereotypes, or were they be forced to use stereotypes for description’s sake? If the later was true, does this mean that they were unable to call stereotypes into question?

BLIND TEST METHODOLOGY

The blind test was adapted from Melanie Wiber’s book *Erect Men/Undulating Women*, an intensive study of human origin illustrations (Wiber 1997). After collecting a series of images employing mythic narratives about human origins for two years, Wiber designed a blind test, which involved one student (who I will call the interviewer) describing images to a second student (who I will call the interviewee) who was placed behind a screen and was thus unable to see the illustrations (Wiber 1997:9). The interviewee was asked to place each description into one of four pre-selected categories, based on themes found regularly in paleoanthropological literature. Wiber was searching for a connection between conventions (both artistic and paleoanthropological) and the narrative aspect of the pictures described because she feared that popular depiction was being read as objective truth (Wiber 1997:9). In human origin illustrations, artists and publishers present these illustrations as hard facts, when in reality they have more to do

with Western art conventions than historical accuracy. Images employing the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, however, rarely (if ever) make such a truth claim. Even so, the same fear exists for my project: is the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” (as the victor and the vanquished) being read as objective truth?

The blind test was methodologically useful because it provided a stimulus for interviewers to describe what they saw in the illustrations without any input from researchers, who might direct their attention or lead their interpretations. I believed that it was possible to conduct a useful series of blind tests with only eight to twelve participants. These participants were acquired via nonrandom quota sampling with equal gender distribution in the same way as participants in the focus group were acquired. This was important for consistency purposes. The same participants in the focus group, however, were not used in the blind test because of the need to have interviewers and interviewees stimulated without previous researcher input. Due to the difficulty in finding participants for the focus group, and due to a number of people offering to participate in the project who were not currently attending university, I expanded the subpopulation of interest to include young Canadians who are not currently attending university.

In order to prevent “cheating” among participants, a moderator participated in all blind tests. As in the focus groups, a female moderator and a male moderator were used in coordinating each gender specific test. The same female graduate student who assisted in the focus groups moderated the female blind tests. I moderated the male blind tests. By “cheating,” I refer to the possibility that unsupervised participants could show each other the images, altering the accuracy of data. Perhaps this fear of cheating was a bit pessimistic, but it helped to establish a more consistent approach to conducting the blind

tests. Moderators were also responsible for ensuring that the tape recorder did not have problems and that images were viewed in sequence.

PARTIAL-BLIND TECHNIQUE

This blind test utilized a partial-blind technique, a powerful method for controlling experimenter expectancy and related bias. This procedure requires that researchers do not know which experimental or control condition that the participants are assigned to for a portion of the study (Marczyk *et al.* 2005:75–6). The partial-blind technique was necessary in this study in order to avoid inadvertently introducing experimenter bias (Marczyk *et al.* 2005:75–6). Experimenter bias refers to the potential for researchers themselves to inadvertently influence the behavior of research participants in a certain direction (Marczyk *et al.* 2005:69). In order to accomplish this moderators did not choose which participants became the interviewer or interviewee in the blind test. Instead, participants decided on their positions amongst themselves with no researcher input after the blind test procedure had been explained to them (moderators left the room during this process). The partial-blind technique ensured that the interviewers and interviewees in the blind test were randomly assigned, instead of being assigned by the researcher or moderator in a way that could lead to biased results.

BLIND TEST IMAGES¹⁵

One major difficulty with the blind test was finding trademarks employing the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition that have as much relevance as the human origin illustrations used by Wiber (1997). A male graduate student who had not assisted

¹⁵ Please refer to Appendix A in order to see the images used in the blind test.

previously in any aspect of this research project assisted in choosing images in the blind test. Initially, over forty images were compiled as candidates for the project. In the aggregate many images were similar in scope and narrative, and a large number of potential images came from the world of professional sports. The male graduate student was asked to sift through over twenty of the initial forty plus images, omitting ones that were either repetitive (i.e., looked like another image) or lacked narrative qualities, but retaining ones that he felt were stereotypical in nature or contained exotic or aggressive qualities. A total of twelve images were selected for the blind test after consulting with the male graduate student. I had pre-selected five of these images and used the graduate student's suggestions in deciding on the final seven images. This approach to image selection differs from Wiber, who used images that were found in textbooks and popular science because of their role in "teaching" evolution to readers. Since this project relied on using trademarks, and not images used for "teaching," I felt that a different approach was necessary. I asked the male graduate student for assistance for two reasons: first, in order to have someone point out aspects of images that I may have missed (for example, the American Indian Movement logo (discussed below) utilizes an optical illusion that I did not recognize, despite having the image as a candidate for months prior to the actual tests); and secondly, in order to help me pick trademarks that were not well known, insofar as, despite the fact that many of the trademarks were unknown to me, he was able to recognize many that I could not.

Of the five pre-selected images, two were selected because of their prominence in literature dealing with similar topics, and their previous use in my own research: the most important, the Washington Redskins logo, name, and mascot have already been discussed. The Marlboro cigarette mascot, the Marlboro Man, was also selected due to its

prominence. Naomi Klein, for example, calls the Marlboro Man a “legend” because, not only is it the longest running ad campaign in history (being launched in 1954 and continuing to this day), it also lends its name to an incident that occurred on April 2, 1993, when Phillip Morris cut the price of Marlboro brand cigarettes by twenty percent to compete with “bargain brands” that were eating into its market share (Klein 2000:12). Wall Street dubbed this day “Marlboro Friday,” declaring the death of the brand reasoning that, “if a ‘prestige’ brand like Marlboro, whose image has been carefully groomed, preened and enhanced with more than a billion advertising dollars, was desperate enough to compete with no-names, then clearly the whole concept of branding had lost its currency” (Klein 2000:12). Despite the fact that Wall Street anticipated a sea change in the world of branding, the brand still exists. For over fifty years the Marlboro Man has been associated with both masculinity and a rustic nostalgia for a world of “Cowboys,” a brand identity that (in theory) must still hold sway over the public based on how long the brand has continued to thrive without any changes to its “brand identity.” The remaining three pre-selected images were Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl advertisements, and an old “Ya-hoo Mountain Dew” advertisement. It is important to explore responses to non-“Cowboy and Indian” based imagery because of the potential for an infinite number of equally powerful myths being read in our society. Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl were selected because of their prominence in literature challenging North American myths about ecology and the benefits of controlled burning (see Dods 2002; Stewart 2002). The Mountain Dew advertisement was selected because it helps to illuminate that brands like the Marlboro Man are an exception to the rule: Mountain Dew’s brand identity has undergone various metamorphoses since the product began mass distribution in the United States by Pepsi-Cola in 1964, initially identifying with

hillbillies and mountain-folk. Eventually, Mountain Dew would become associated with the grunge-rock of the early 1990s when “Beavis and Butthead” replaced hillbillies as the brand’s mascot (Stoddard 1997:142–4).

The seven remaining images selected for the blind test (based on the graduate student’s suggestions are (in order of appearance in the blind test): the Cleveland Indians baseball team logo, the Squaw Creek Farm logo, a Wrangler Jeans “Cowboy Cut” advertisement, the American Indian Movement logo, a photocell of Woody from the film *Toy Story*, a photo of Chief Osceola, mascot of the Florida State Seminoles, and the American Indian Family Center logo. Some trademarked images, characters, or logos that were omitted (for the reasons noted above) are the Dallas Cowboys, Kansas City Chiefs, and Edmonton Eskimos football logos; the Dallas Stars and Chicago Blackhawks hockey logos; the San Antonio Spurs basketball logo; the Atlanta Braves baseball logo; Rustler’s Pepperoni (which features a Cowboy that is very similar to the Marlboro Man); and Big Indian Chewing Tobacco.

Emphasis was also placed on the importance of including trademarks with different agendas. The Washington Redskins and Marlboro Man are both trademarks owned by large corporations that have the purpose of selling wares. This type of trademark is the most common in the world of trademarks. For this reason the majority of trademarks used in the blind test are of this nature. The Cleveland Indians, Wrangler Jeans, the “Mountain Dew” advertisement, Squaw Creek Farm, Woody from *Toy Story*, and Chief Osceola all fall into this category. I have only included three sports-related trademarks despite their role in the focus group. To overlook non-sports trademarks that employ similar imagery would be too narrow in scope and would not allow for investigation into a necessary aspect of myth: recurrence. Another reason for including a

variety of examples from outside the world of sports is that many sports logos do not contain the narrative characteristics that are necessary for this project. Many sports logos are also easily recognizable. This was an issue that the male graduate student emphasized in helping me select images. Squaw Creek Farm and Chief Osceola were included because they are not easily recognizable in Atlantic Canada. I have also included two logos (The American Indian Family Center and American Indian Movement logos) that are not owned by multinational corporations but are instead owned by pan-indigenous organizations. These are important additions because of the potential that they had in helping to determine whether or not participants would take offense (if at all) to all depictions of First Nations people because they were “politically sensitive” without understanding the context of the images. Not all images that have pictures of “Indians” on them are necessarily stereotypes or myths. Having images that have been described as stereotypical by First Nations people side-by-side with images created and used by First Nations people was useful because it forced interviewers to have to think carefully about “Indianness” in their descriptions.

BLIND TEST CATEGORIES¹⁶

Four categories were selected for the blind test: “Wild Wild West,” “Ideal Nature,” “The Legacy of Conquest,” and “Real American Indian.” These categories are not arbitrary. Instead, they were selected because of their prominence in critical analysis and their indeterminate quality. All appear in literature dealing with similar topics. “Wild Wild West” was adapted from *Dancing at Halftime*, a book written by Spindel (2000:108–19). “Legacy of Conquest” was adapted from *The Nervous System*, which

¹⁶ Please see Appendix B for the layout of this document.

offers a discussion of the role of conquest in how people interpret historical events (Taussig 1992:37–52). “Real American Indian” stems from ideas contained within *Dancing at Halftime* (Spindel 2000), *Who Owns Native Culture?* (Brown 2003), and *American Cinema, American Culture* (Belton 2005). “Ideal Nature” is based on ideas found in the book *Forgotten Fires* and the Rousseauian notion of the “noble savage” (Stewart 2002). The indeterminate qualities of the categories are important because they encourage interviewees to think more carefully about the categories selected than if these had been more concrete (for example, “Cowboy” instead of “Wild Wild West”).

Prior to settling on these indeterminate categories, some candidates were not abstract and were based explicitly on results from the focus group. Some candidates were: “Cowboy,” “Indian,” “Historically Accurate,” and “Historically Inaccurate.” These categories proved to be too arbitrary for the blind test, and did not take account of the significance of exoticism and competition in responses to questions asked in the focus group. Even so, the first two candidates were still represented in the blind test as “Wild Wild West” and “Real American Indian;” and “Ideal Nature” and “Legacy of Conquest” included connotations of exoticism and aggression/competition respectively.

It is important to note that the categories were not the focus of the research. Instead, how the interviewer described the images was the most important aspect of the analysis. This was due to the subjective nature of the categories.

BLIND TEST SAMPLE

Seven blind test interviews were conducted in the Department of Anthropology’s graduate student office at UNB, Fredericton. Only five were usable due to two tapes being accidentally erased. The blind test involved two participants. One participant,

dubbed the interviewer, described images displayed on a computer monitor to a second participant, dubbed the interviewee, who could not see these images. The interviewee then choose one of four categories that he or she thought best suited the description. The interviewee could ask any question of the interviewer in order to help in choosing a category. In two tests (both female), the interviewee did not ask questions, relying only on the interviewer's initial description. In the remaining three tests, the interviewee asked questions after nearly every description before making a choice. The interviewer was asked not to explicitly say exactly what was depicted if he or she recognized the character or logo. The interviewer was also asked not to read any text that was written on any image, though mentioning that text was present was acceptable. As mentioned above, twelve images were used in the blind test. The images did not change from test to test. All images depicted a trademarked logo, mascot, or character.

Three of the usable tests consisted of two female participants. The remaining two consisted of male participants. Nine of the ten participants were European Canadians. One male participant was Iroquoian. Three female participants and two male participants were undergraduates at St. Thomas University or the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton; two male participants worked in the local restaurant industry, one had some university education; two female participants attended the local Crafts College; and the final female participant was a local worker who had not attended university. All participants were between the ages of 19 and 25, and all were born and raised in Canada.

DATA

In the following sections, I will focus on three data sets that appeared prominent after reviewing the results of the blind tests in the aggregate:

1. How did the interviewers describe each picture?
2. What is the frequency of categories selected based on these descriptions?
3. What is the frequency of thematic words/indicators in each test? What is the frequency of questions asked by interviewees?

Each data set is useful for this project because they allow for a glimpse at how participants attempted to transmit the meaning of the “Cowboy and Indian” images to one another. The interviewer description, however, is the focus of the analysis. The latter two data sets developed out of the interviewer descriptions. For this reason, the next section will deal with unanalyzed interviewer descriptions. With twelve images described by five interviewers, there are a total of sixty descriptions that need to be discussed. For this reason, only the interviewer descriptions, and not the interviewee questions will be presented. For organizational purposes, I will discuss all of the descriptions for each image before moving on to the next image. To avoid repetition, each description will be provided in the same sequence as they appeared in the blind tests. Each new description will be indented as quotations. After all descriptions for a particular image have been displayed the variation of chosen categories will be provided. Analysis will follow the presentation of the raw data.

INTERVIEWER DESCRIPTIONS

To ensure that the descriptions are easy to read I have removed all pauses, “uhs” and “uhms,” and have corrected words or phrases that were spoken improperly. For example, when one interviewer said “a owl,” this has been changed to “an owl,” etc. The dates of each test and the sex of respondents are in chronological order of the dates of each test (from first to last) for each description. Therefore, the dates and sex will only be

stated in the first description: they are consistent from image to image. I have also included ellipses where the description has been interrupted by an interviewee question.

A discussion of questions appears at the end of this section.

The first image depicts the Marlboro Man mascot. The image was described in this way:

“The first slide is a picture of a man with leather, I’d say chaps on. A cowboy hat and a cigarette in his mouth.” (Female, blind test conducted March 1, 2007)

“It’s a cowboy smoking a cigarette, lighting a cigarette, holding a rein with a cowboy hat.” (Female, March 1, 2007)

“Well, there’s a guy and he’s got a red shirt on. He’s wearing a cowboy hat. It’s white...I think he’s strapped on to a horse or something. He has kind of a horse type leash in his hands.” (Male, March 5, 2007)

“There’s a gentleman saddled up on a horse with a white cowboy hat on and he’s lighting up a cigarette...It’s a close-up so they’re not showing the horse or anything. The background is kind of blurred and he’s kind of hanging out. He looks like he’s going to enjoy that cigarette.” (Female, March 14, 2007)

“The first picture is a cigarette ad. It’s got a cowboy lighting a cigarette. He looks sort of like, what’s the cowboy, the famous cowboy? Clint Eastwood. He kind of looks like Clint Eastwood. He’s got a white cowboy hat and he’s got the reins up in his hands as he lights the cigarette.” (Male, March 22, 2007)

For the Marlboro Man image all interviewees chose the category “Wild Wild West.” This was the only image that did not have any variation among chosen categories.¹⁷ Otherwise there was a great deal of variation in category selection.

The second image depicts the Cleveland Indians baseball logo. It was described as follows:

“The second image is a red and blue face. The face of a mascot who happens to have a feather coming up from the back of his head, and a large cartoony smile, and also there’s a headband. Pretty large mouth too.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

¹⁷ This may suggest that “Cowboy” as a category is either less ambiguous, or perhaps only less politically sensitive than “Indian.” I will return to this possibility later because I do not want to present any analysis prior to presenting the raw data.

“There’s a red Native with a feather, a red feather wearing a blue cap, with a big smile and big white teeth.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

“It’s red. And it’s a smiley face. Very, very happy kind of cheeky kind of smiley face. And with black hair.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

“Alright, this one is an emblem, an emblem for a sports team and it’s an image of a Native American.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“It’s a baseball logo. It has an Indian with red skin. Big smile, big toothy smile, and a little red feather poking out of his head.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

The Cleveland Indians logo showed the widest variation. Individual interviewees selected all four categories after only five blind tests. Two interviewees chose the category “Real American Indian.” The other categories were all picked once.

The third image was of the Squaw Creek Farm logo. This is the only logo depicting “Cowboys” or “Indians” that features a female. Interviewers described it in this way:

“The next image is of a woman and we know she’s Native because of what she’s wearing. She’s got long, dark hair, dark skin, is in the forest with some little birds all around her and is like a Native Snow White, and she’s got the traditional garb on, the leather and Native textile patterns on her.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

“There’s a Native American holding a yellow bird, wearing traditional Native dress and long black hair.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

“It’s a Native woman and she’s sitting down with some kind of dress type thing on. She’s perching her finger out for a bird.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

“Okay, this one is of a girl who is sitting in a forest wearing probably hide skin and fringe, long flowing brown hair, with a bird perched on her finger and a little other bird around her with trees and grass and everything.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

“This is an advertisement for a farm. It has what looks to be a very pretty Indian woman dressed in sort of a shawl and she’s sitting down on a forest floor and the forest is very pretty and very detailed looking, sort of bright in the background. Trees and birch trees and she has what I would see as traditional garb. Very long black hair, a necklace with what looks like reeds and beads. Shiny. There’s a bird on her finger, and there’s a duck in the corner. Lots of birds around. It looks like, almost like, she’s having a conversation with the bird. She’s got it perched up on one finger and she’s gesturing with the other finger. Gesturing with the other hand.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

The Squaw Creek Farm logo had a low level of variation. Four interviewees chose the category “Ideal Nature,” while one interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”

The fourth image depicts an advertisement for Wrangler Jeans Cowboy Cut. It was described as:

“Alright, the next image is an image of a man with a cowboy hat on, pretty tight jeans, cowboy boots with spurs, a lasso, and a little baby calf that’s at the other end of the lasso.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

“A cowboy roping a calf, wearing blue jeans and a cowboy hat; wearing spurs and cowboy boots.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

“Well, another cowboy who’s got a lasso. He’s trying to reel a cow in.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“This one is of a guy wearing a type of jeans and unusually tight ankles. It’s a gentleman. He’s lassoed a little calf and he has like spurs on his cowboy boots and a cowboy hat on.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“This is a jean advertisement. A cowboy lassoing a bull. The cowboy is right up in the foreground and you see his back. You can see that he’s got cowboy boots on, a cowboy hat, and the bull is quite a bit back in the background so it’s very small compared to the cowboy...It doesn’t seem that the cowboy is having a difficult time. He’s got the bull, the line is taut, and he doesn’t look like he’s exerting a whole lot of pressure on it.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

The Wrangler Jeans Cowboy Cut advertisement also had low variation, with three interviewees choosing the category “Legacy of Conquest” and two interviewees choosing “Wild Wild West.”

The fifth image depicts an old Mountain Dew soda pop advertisement. This is not an explicitly “Cowboy” or “Indian” based image. Interviewers said:

“So the next image is of paintings of a fence. There are five different representations. Two are little boys with cut up overalls and ripped pants, with hats, drinking something. One is of a little girl with her knees bent inward, a short dress and pigtails. Another is of an old lady with a big fruppy dress and apron on carrying a baby. Another is of an older man with a big cowboy hat and a bottle of something. He has a plaid shirt on too.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

“There are five people, three children and two adults that look like grandparents. One is holding a baby. They are animated cartoon characters. The three children are drinking from bottles. They appear as though they are playing, having fun...there is a girl wearing a dress with red hair. A boy wearing overalls, a little boy wearing a t-shirt and short pants, and there’s an older man wearing a cowboy hat. The old lady is wearing an apron and a hat.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“[It] looks like a wooden board, or like a piece of a door, like a raft or something. It’s got pictures above the board of different people...there’s an old man, an old woman, a few kids. They’re kind of dressed like they’re down in the dumps, run of the mill type people. Maybe a little short on cash. That’s the way they look, I guess. But they’re having fun.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

“Okay, this one has five smaller images. The first one is what looks like a younger boy and he’s got a goofy hat on and little knickers that are red. Under the knickers are bare feet and he’s blowing into the top of a bottle. A girl is the next little image and she’s wearing a little green dress with a little patch on it. Bare feet as well. Red hair. And she looks like she is blowing into the bottom of her bottle. In the middle there’s what appears to be like the older man, the father figure or something of the bunch. He’s got a yellow-black checkered shirt on with suspenders and a blue cowboy hat. Following is what appears to be a mother holding a baby with an apron with a bonnet on her head, and then the last image is of a little boy and he has pants on that are obviously too big for him with suspenders holding them up, up around his boobs, and a little hat and he’s drinking out of a bottle. And a patch, he also has a patch on his pants. All of them would embarrass you except for one.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“This is a soft drink advertisement. It’s a fence, sort of like a picket fence. It’s not painted. It’s uneven. It’s got five pickets going up and near the bottom it’s got a crossbeam that’s holding it together. On each of the vertical pickets there’s an individual illustration. On the first one it’s, what looks sort of like, I don’t know, a little boy, I guess, with a stupid hat, and he’s holding the pop up to his head, his face. The next one is a girl and she’s dressed in a yellow dress, and she’s holding it up to her lips too. The next one is an old looking guy with a checkered shirt and suspenders and he’s wearing a big green cowboy hat. And then the next one is an old woman holding a baby. And the last one is another boy, with overalls this time, drinking the pop. And they all look like sort of poor white trash people. For the most part the clothes are patched and the colors are sort of ugly as well. They all look like hicks...[They appear to be from] Kansas, or Arkansas or something like that. They would be in the hills of Arkansas or something like that. Yeah, they look like real fun and they love the pop. They just love it...the old lady is plugging her ears. Apparently the baby is crying or something. She’s not drinking the pop. Neither is the man in the middle, I guess. It’s a really weird picture.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

For the old Mountain Dew advertisement, two interviewees chose the category

“Wild Wild West,” two chose “Legacy of Conquest,” and one chose “Real American Indian.”

The sixth image depicts the American Indian Movement logo:

“The next image is, I believe, a logo that’s recent. It’s a circle. In the circle are words and the innermost has a circle with a hand gesture in the shape of a peace sign but it’s supposed to also look like a Native American with a headdress on...the background of the logo is black. The actual picture is red. That’s about it. I can’t explain anymore. It looks like a pretty modern logo.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“This is, it looks like a logo with a hand and a face? The hand is like in a peace sign and it’s a profile of a face inside of three circles...The hand is red and there’s three yellow circles, three yellow rings around it. And the face, the palm of the hand is a profile of a face.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“Kind of a hand, I guess, and it’s red...It’s lifting two fingers up. Kind of like bunny ears. And there’s somewhat of a, like a face coming out of the hand. But it’s not really visible. It’s all like silhouette kind of thing. All in red.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“This one seems to be a crest for a business or, well not a business, but, like a club. It seems to be for like a group of some sort and it’s a black square and

inside the black square is a white circle and the white circle is outlined in yellow and it's for, let me think, inside the white circle is the yellow rim around it, and inside that there is a peace sign made with fingers but there's also gestured a head with the other side of the hand, so it's kind of like a logo with a peace sign, but it's also kind of digitally imaged to display a face... You can see a nose. It's a side profile...it's all one color. It's red." (The interviewee chose the category "Real American Indian.")

"This one is what looks like a patch for a, not necessarily a political group, but maybe a poster I guess. The background is black and the patch itself is white and it's rimmed with gold. And so there's three gold circles. In the middle there is a red hand, which is giving something like a peace sign. And then its got black texting in the outer circle with red text in the middle circle and this red hand in the very middle circle, or I mean the innermost circle...It has the thumb tucked in and the index ring, the index and middle finger extended." (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

For the American Indian Movement logo, three interviewees chose "Legacy of Conquest," one chose "Ideal Nature," and one chose "Real American Indian."

The seventh image depicts a Smokey Bear forest fire prevention campaign:

"In the background there's a raging fire. Looks like some burned trees and there's a big bear wearing jeans and carrying a shovel and wearing a ranger hat with two little bears in the background holding a little baby deer...I think that the two bears in the background may be trying to save the deer." (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

"Next is a bear in a fire, you know, Smokey the Bear¹⁸ from childhood. There are two younger bears. It looks like a forest fire, burning trees." (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

"It's a bear and he's wearing pants...He's standing with a shovel pointing behind him. There's a couple of little bears sitting behind him too, and I think that's a deer, yeah, it's a deer that one of the bears has...he's kind of hugging it. He's giving him a hug. The deer kind of looks a little mad, like he doesn't really want to be there." (The interviewee chose the category "Legacy of Conquest.")

"Okay this one is something we used to see of lot of when we were younger. He used to do safety commercials. It's a bear. He's wearing pants and has a ranger hat on, and there's fire in the background. The trees are all burnt away, and there's another little family of what appears to be two bears and a little rabbit. He's kind of cute. But there's a slogan on it and it has to do with safety...[the

¹⁸ This particular description is not very useful: the interviewer broke one of the main rules, that is, not to say the name of the character that is being described.

animals] are huddling together.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“This is a public service poster. It has a bear with a shovel, in jeans, and a forest ranger hat. And he’s looking toward whoever’s looking at the picture. And he’s pointing at a forest that is mostly burned down. You can see burned trees but the fire is still going on in the background. And to his right and in the background there are a pair of deer cubs hugging, or sorry, a pair of bear cubs hugging a baby deer. They look like zen, and the bear in front is sort of being cautionary.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

For the Smokey Bear fire prevention campaign, three interviewees chose “Ideal Nature,” while two chose “Legacy of Conquest.”

The eighth image depicts the character “Woody” from the film *Toy Story*. It is a cell from the film:

“The next image is a digital cartoon type image. The main character is in close range with a cowboy hat on. Looks like a child’s toy wearing a vest in black and white, a yellow plaid shirt, a red bandana, a little sheriff’s badge, the vest, and in the background there is an older man with a bandana, a black hat, and a lot of facial hair.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

“It looks like a cartoon character, like a cowboy, he’s got a big smile on his face.” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

“We have a person that’s not really altogether with it, I guess. He’s kind of staring off in space. And once again this is another cowboy. [There are two men]. One’s kind of a little tied up. The other one’s kind of just gazing, in awe and stuff, it just kind of seems like gazing. The other one’s kind of looking at him, but he’s kind of stuck. Well, not really stuck, but he’s planted.” (The interviewee chose the category “Legacy of Conquest.”)

“The next one is a character from the very first graphic movie...” (The interviewee chose the category “Wild Wild West.”)

“This would be a digitally animated cowboy character from a film. He’s a toy. I mean there’s a toy box in the background, and he has a cowboy hat and he’s very pale. He has big brown eyes. Looks very happy, sort of in a naïve way. He’s standing next to a box of another cowboy with a cowboy hat. He’s old with a beard ...He’s an animated character. A computer animated character...he’s up in the foreground very close to the camera so that it sort of cuts off at the shoulders. And sort of in the background next to him is a toy in a box, and the cowboy in the box seems to be looking at the cowboy that’s looking at us...the one closest to us that’s looking at us seems very impressed or excited or sort of happily mystified

by something that's happening. It's hard to tell with the guy in the box, if he is animate or not. He looks like he is looking at the cowboy outside the box. The younger one looks naively happy and the other one looks like he is happy that the other one is happy about whatever it is that's impressing him." (The interviewee chose the category "Wild Wild West.")

The *Toy Story* photocell depicting "Woody" also had low variation. Four interviewees chose "Wild Wild West." The other interviewee chose "Legacy of Conquest."

The ninth image is a photo of Chief Osceola, mascot of the Florida State University Seminoles football team:

"The next image is—in the background it looks like a stadium filled with people. They're all looking to the foreground, which contains a horse arching up on its back legs. It's black and white. Kind of a dotted color horse. On the horse is a Native American with headdress, bandana and leather pants and a large stick in his hand with a lot of feathers all over his stick and a flame at the top." (The interviewee chose the category "Real American Indian.")

"The next is a Native American riding a horse, and they are performing for a crowd. He's carrying a large stick with feathers and there's fire on one end and he's throwing it toward the ground and he's wearing traditional Native American dress." (The interviewee chose the category "Legacy of Conquest.")

"We have a Native man. He's riding a horse and he's carrying a crazy stick with different colors on it...He's just, the horse is kind of riding towards you. He's coming towards the screen and he's looking away at the stick with all of the colors on it. The stick kind of has like feathers or something on it...The background is a whole crapload of people. Like, they're in a stadium or something." (The interviewee chose the category "Legacy of Conquest.")

"This one seems to be at like a, he's in what seems to be like a big football field, but it's not your traditional sport that would be viewed at that. It's like a Native American festival, or like a sporting event where there's an audience, people standing or sitting in a crowd, like a podium. He's on a horse and he looks to be in traditional dress, like a traditional Native attire and he's holding a spear with one end flaming...You can make out the images of people standing...The image that is clear is the Native American on a horse holding a spear...It seems like it's athletic maybe a festival of some sort." (The interviewee chose the category "Real American Indian.")

"It's a Native man riding a spotted white horse in what looks to be a stadium of some kind. You can see in the unfocused background stands full of people. And

then in the foreground there is this Native man in either traditional or stereotypical traditional garb. There is a feather coming out of his bandana and a red bandana wrapped around his head. He appears to have face paint on. And he's got a big long spear pointing towards the ground. It's covered in multi-colored feathers. And he's got what looks to be like moccasins or boots on, and he's riding this white horse with brown spots. And it looks like he's just about to thrust the spear into the ground...It seems like he's part of a spectacle...I just realized that I think that there is fire on the top of the spear. So, maybe it's more of a torch than a spear, but the bottom part of it is quite sharp so it could be both...[It's most striking] that he's an Indian because the feathers on the spear are what stand out the most. They're very, very visible. They would be the most visible singular thing." (The interviewee chose the category "Real American Indian.")

When choosing a category for Chief Osceola, mascot of the Florida State University Seminoles, two interviewees chose "Legacy of Conquest," while three interviewees chose "Real American Indian."

The tenth image depicts the Washington Redskins NFL logo:

"The next image is, it's a logo too. It contains two large white feathers on the outside of a circle. Inside is yellow. There is text on the outside of the circle. Also inside of the circle is a Native American man with a braid in his hair, two feathers hanging from the back of his head, his skin is brown, and he has a large nose and cut features." (The interviewee chose the category "Legacy of Conquest.")

"The next is a Native American logo. It looks to be a picture of a Native profile, a face, surrounded by yellow circles and two feathers on the side." (The interviewee chose the category "Legacy of Conquest.")

"It's another Native's face. Only it's just a silhouette of his face. One side. And it's very, very red skin, and very, very dark hair. Well, black hair. There are a couple of feathers coming out of his head. They're white. With a big yellow circle around him, with another couple of feathers. They're white." (The interviewee chose the category "Wild Wild West.")

"The next image is a side profile of a Native American and it seems to have writing of the language that they would speak. I don't understand what it is but there are two feathers and the side profile is of a Native American face in a yellow circle and the colors are yellow, white, black, and red." (The interviewee chose the category "Legacy of Conquest.")

"This one is a logo for something. The words are in another language. The alphabet is another language as well. It has a red-faced Indian male with feathers in his hair and his hair is braided on his shoulder. And there is a white

background within a yellow circle and then sort of attached to the left side of the circle are another pair of feathers, which are right, no sorry, which are white, with yellow at the tips...it's a red-faced Native male...In is much as it has red skin, the braid and the feathers [it is stereotypical]. But he has a very strong face. He has a very strong nose for example. He's got a very determined look on his face. Not angry determined, but there is definite strength. His cheekbones have shadows. His nose has a shadow as well...[He looks] friendly insofar as there is determination there, but there is also benevolence in the face all at the same time." (The interviewee chose the category "Real American Indian.")

For the Washington Redskins logo, one interviewee chose "Wild Wild West," three interviewees chose "Legacy of Conquest," and one interviewee chose "Real American Indian."

The eleventh image depicts an old Woodsy Owl ecology advertisement. This is the final image that does not depict something explicitly "Cowboy" or "Indian:"

"The next one is of a little owl and he is beige and brown. He's got a Robin Hood cap on, with a little red feather sticking up out of the back and it's just his head. There is no body and around him is text." (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

"The next is a picture of an owl, a cartoon owl, with big white eyes, and a green hat with a red feather." (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

"Alright. It's an owl, just an owl. Actually, it's just the owl's face. It's not really like a real owl. It's more like a cartoon owl wearing a green hat...your Robin Hood kind of hat...He's got his mouth open and he's looking off to the side, so it looks like he's trying to say something. But I don't think he is. Oh, no wait, maybe he is. You never know." (The interviewee chose the category "Wild Wild West.")

"It's a cartoon image of an owl with a Robin Hood little hat on. It is green and it has the red feather and it has a little cute saying about taking care of the world." (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

"This looks like a—I think this is a sign that you would see in the woods, like a service announcement. And it's got an owl wearing a sort of Peter Pan hat, like a little green hat with a red feather coming out of it, and this is an anthropomorphized owl and he looks sort of cheery. And it looks like it's been painted on a piece of, I don't know, birch wood or something like that. And there's text above him and below him as well...you're supposed to get the impression that he's talking to you...He's cheerfully suggesting that we all

participate in this, these activities.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

The Woodsy Owl advertisement had low variation, with four interviewees choosing “Ideal Nature” and one interviewee choosing “Wild Wild West.”

The final image depicts the American Indian Family Movement logo:

“The next one is also a logo where there’s text on the outside of a circle and at the bottom of the circle are coming out four feathers. There’s red, yellow and black on the first inside circle. Within the circle is the shape of a cross or, maybe it might not be a cross, like the directional four spirits or, four directions, or something. In between the cross, the corners of the circle are black, white, red, and yellow, and in the innermost part of the circle there’s a family. I say it’s a family because there is a silhouette of a man, a woman, and then two, shorter silhouettes that look like children.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

“There’s four people, like a family maybe, two adults; two little children standing inside a cross with a round circle around that with four feathers.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

“It’s a very unique logo. It’s unique. It’s a circle and it’s got four different colors: black, yellow, red, white. It’s got a bunch of shadows, or silhouettes of people. All black. It’s just four people standing there. And in the back of them it looks like the same kind of thing, like the shadow of them but in white. And there’s a couple of yellow hands...you can tell that the girls are wearing dresses and that the guys aren’t.” (The interviewee chose the category “Ideal Nature.”)

“This image is for another Native logo or group or emblem of that nature. It’s a circle and in the circle it is divided in four, and in the four there’s one in white, one in black, one in yellow, one is red. And there are profiles, not profiles, they’re negatives, images of people, two families that are holding hands and, if you could imagine a circle, the two families would be in the middle and they extend out past the circle. On either side there are two hands and at the bottom of the circle there are four feathers branching out from the middle...It could be an advertisement, but it doesn’t have any like, “we’re advertising for this,” kind of deal. It’s more like, “this is our logo,” and it’s like a way to represent them. I’m not sure, that’s about it. It’s a circle with a family in the middle and the two hands and four feathers and the black, white, red, and yellow.” (The interviewee chose the category “Real American Indian.”)

“This is a sign that would go along with a building. So it has the name of the building across the top. It’s on a white background. In the middle is a circle. Around the outside of the circle are these bands, yellow, black, and red, and then, within that circle is a smaller circle that is divided into four. Each quarter of the

circle is colored, one white, one black, one yellow, and one red. Crossing over those four quarters are what would appear to be a family, so it's got a small figure, a tall figure with long hair wearing a dress, a taller figure, and a small figure, so it would look like two children, a mother, and a father, and they have white shadows on the four colored quarters of the circle. And then on either side of the circle, outside of it, there are two handprints, which are yellow and then at the very bottom of the circle there are four feathers coming down. They are black at the tips and white on the inside. The main thing of the picture, what's front and center is this silhouette family of four with white shadows, then the colors white, black, yellow, and red. (The interviewee chose the category "Ideal Nature.")

This final image had two interviewees choose "Ideal Nature" and three interviewees choose "Real American Indian."

FREQUENCY OF THEMATIC INDICATORS AND FREQUENCY OF QUESTIONS ASKED BY INTERVIEWEES

Seven thematic indicators were identified prior to analyzing the data. These include the following terms:

1. Cowboy
2. Cowboy Hat
3. Cowboy Boot(s)
4. Indian or Native
5. Feathers
6. Leather
7. Tradition (or any variation of the word)

These seven indicators are important because they demonstrate the amount of times that the particular word was used in description. The focus here is on three different types of indicators:

1. Uses of “Cowboy” and “Indian/Native” are important because they rely explicitly on what the project is dealing with. That is, how do people describe “Cowboys” and “Indians?”
2. Uses of “Cowboy Hat or Boot(s),” “Feathers,” and “Leather” are important indicators of the reliance on garb in formulating descriptions (see the “Thematic Analysis” section at the end of this chapter for more details on the significance of garb).
3. The use of “Tradition” is important because it implicates temporality in the descriptions. Are people using the word “tradition” to denote a static version of a “Cowboy” or “Indian?” If so, then “tradition” is being used mythically: in this way it is more historical distortion than objective reality, and it is also a space-time compression.

In the first test, the word “Cowboy” was used five times. The word “Cowboy” was attached to an article of clothing (hat four times, and boots once) in all instances. The word “Indian” was not used, but the word “Native” was used six times. “Feathers” was used four times; “leather” was used once; and “tradition” was also used once. Including “uhs” and “uhms,” this test had a total word count of 892.

In the second test, the word “Cowboy” was used seven times. The word was followed by “hat” three times, and “boots” once. The word “Indian” was not used, but “Native” was used seven times. “Feathers” was used four times; “leather” was not used; and “tradition” was used twice. Including “uhs” and “uhms,” this test had a total word count of 519.

In the third test, the word “Cowboy” was used three times. This was followed by “hat” once. “Boots,” “Indian,” “feathers,” “leather,” and “tradition” were not used. The

word “Native” was used three times. Including “uhs” and “uhms,” this test had a total word count of 1134.

In the fourth test, the word “Cowboy” was used seven times. This was followed by “hat” three times, and “boots” once. The word “Indian” was used once, and the word “Native” was used eight times. “Feathers” was used three times, “leather” was not used, and “tradition” was used three times. Including “uhs” and “uhms,” this test had a total word count of 1583.

In the final test, the word “Cowboy” was used twenty-three times. This was followed by “hat” five times, and “boots” once. The words “Indian” and “Native” were each used five times. “Feathers” was used nine times, “leather” was not used, and “tradition” was used once. Including “uhs” and “uhms,” this test had a total word count of 2255.

THEMATIC INDICATORS AND CATEGORY TRIGGERS¹⁹

It is important here to spend a few moments discussing whether or not there is a correlation between the frequency of thematic indicators used by interviewers and categories selected by interviewees, and whether or not these thematic indicators played a role in triggering category selection. Four images, the Marlboro Man, Smokey Bear, Woodsy Owl, and the photocell from *Toy Story* appear to have been chosen categorically based on the interviewees’ recognition of the depicted character and for this reason any correlation between thematic indicators and categorical selection is marginal. The eight

¹⁹ In order to avoid repetition and due to the length of this particular section I will not reiterate the descriptions in the blind tests. Instead, I will propose that the reader should look at the blind test description section again if clarity is needed.

remaining images, however, are worthy of some discussion regarding this potential correlation, mostly due to the wide variation of category selection among interviewees.

As mentioned above, the second image, the Cleveland Indians logo, received the widest variation, with each category being selected after only five tests. The two interviewees that choose the category “Real American Indian” relied heavily on descriptions that used the main “Indian-based” thematic indicators noted above. In each case, the words “feather” and “Indian or Native” were used, and the red color of the character’s skin was emphasized. In the example where the interviewee chose “Ideal Nature,” the descriptive emphasis was on the character’s large smile, despite some mention of a red face and black hair. The interviewee who chose “Wild Wild West” relied on a description that did not include any of the abovementioned thematic indicators, and the interviewee who chose “Legacy of Conquest,” relied on a description that focused on a Native American being depicted in a sports logo, with no thematic indicators being mentioned outside of the character’s ethnicity.

The third image, the Squaw Creek Farm logo had a low level of variation with four interviewees choosing “Ideal Nature” and one interviewee choosing “Real American Indian.” The four interviewees who chose the former category relied on descriptions that, despite using a number of thematic indicators, emphasized the role of the forest and animals in the image, with one interviewer claiming that she was like “a Native Snow White.” Most of these descriptions also focused heavily on garb, but the emphasis was on the quality of “nature” or “wilderness” and the character’s seemingly tranquil existence in this “nature” or “wilderness.” The interviewee who chose “Real American Indian” relied on a description that also included these thematic indicators, but did not emphasize the role of the image’s “natural surroundings.”

The fourth image, depicting a Wrangler Jeans “Cowboy Cut” advertisement had three interviewees choosing “Legacy of Conquest” and two interviewees choosing “Wild Wild West.” In all descriptions the thematic indicator of “Cowboy garb” was emphasized. In the examples where “Legacy of Conquest” was chosen, additional emphasis was given on the action of the “Cowboy” roping a bull. For this reason, the “Legacy of Conquest” that interviewees appear to be hinting at should not be viewed as a colonial “Legacy of Conquest,” but a “Legacy of Conquest” that involves a human being overcoming and exerting force on “nature,” insofar as the character is “conquering” an animal.

The fifth image, arguably the most complex in terms of the abundance of things happening in the depiction, is of an old Mountain Dew soda pop advertisement. Two interviewees chose “Wild Wild West,” two interviewees chose “Legacy of Conquest,” and one interviewee chose “Real American Indian.” I will discuss the implications of the interviewee’s decision to choose “Real American Indian” in a later section. In this example, unlike in the others already described, each interviewer description is very similar to the descriptions of other interviewers, with all four interviewers (with the exception of the one that led to the category “Real American Indian” being chosen) mentioned the fact that one character is wearing a “Cowboy hat.” For this reason it is difficult to make suggestions about why each interviewee chose either “Wild Wild West” or “Legacy of Conquest.” What is striking about this image is that it is not a “Cowboy” image. Instead, it seems to rely more on Depression era poverty, with all characters wearing tattered clothing. It is possible that the ambiguous nature of this image made it difficult for interviewees to choose a category when, by this time in the blind test, they had only been faced with descriptions that were much more clear in terms of containing

“Cowboy” or “Indian” material. It can, however, be expected that the interviewees who chose “Wild Wild West” relied on the mentioning of the “Cowboy hat” in order to chose a category.

The sixth image, the American Indian Movement logo, had higher variation than most other images with three interviewees choosing “Legacy of Conquest,” and “Ideal Nature” and “Real American Indian” each being chosen once. What is compelling about this logo is the fact that it does not contain many of the thematic indicators that I mention above. As a modern logo that has been created by First Nations people for their own use, it omits many of the characteristics of “Indians” that have been popularized in film. For this reason it seems that many interviewers had difficulty describing the image. The image includes an illusion: if you look at it in one way, it appears to be a hand giving a peace sign. If you look at it another way, it appears to be a bust of a red-faced Native American male with two feathers coming out of his head. All interviewers recognized this illusion. There are two things that appear to be in the descriptions that led to interviewees choosing either “Ideal Nature” or “Real American Indian” that are not in the descriptions that led to some interviewees choosing “Legacy of Conquest:” emphasizing the peace sign, and emphasizing that this is either a club or political group run by First Nations people. The peace sign was mentioned in all examples, but in the examples where “Legacy of Conquest” was chosen, this was not given emphasis. The fact that this is a political group was not mentioned also seems to have played an important role in this choice. I believe that in this case, the people who chose “Legacy of Conquest” were led to believe that this logo had somehow removed the “Indianness” from the character. The irony here, a possibility that I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, is that if these interviewees chose “Legacy of Conquest” because they either understood the image as

being offensive, or as missing “Indian qualities,” then a critical gaze has not been demonstrated. In fact, if this is the case then the opposite is true: interviewees may have thought that they were being critical when in fact they positioned the image as being something completely different than what it is: the image, despite lacking “Indianness” has more to do with First Nations people and is more representative of the “Real American Indian” than the Cleveland Indians logo, and the photo of Chief Osceola, which had more interviewees choose “Real American Indian” as a category than here.

The ninth image was a photo of Chief Osceola, mascot of the Florida State Seminoles football team. In this example three interviewees chose “Real American Indian,” while two interviewees chose “Legacy of Conquest.” In this instance interviewees who chose “Real American Indian” relied heavily on descriptions that included all of the “Indian-related” thematic indicators noted above. The two interviewees that chose “Legacy of Conquest,” despite having these indicators described to them, relied heavily on descriptions that focused on the actions of Chief Osceola, who is riding towards the photographer with a flaming stick. In this example it is my suggestion that “Legacy of Conquest” was chosen over “Real American Indian” because of the descriptive emphasis on how Chief Osceola is riding towards the person looking at the photo in a way that suggests the commencement of battle. This suggestion is helped by the fact that one interviewee asked a number of questions before choosing a category, the last being, “What is more striking about the picture: the fact that he is an Indian, or what he’s doing?” The interviewer responded by saying “[It’s most striking] that he’s an Indian because the feathers on the spear are what stand out the most.” It can be anticipated that if the interviewer had claimed that Chief Osceola’s actions were more striking than his ethnicity that the interviewee would have chosen “Legacy of Conquest”

and not “Real American Indian.” What is ironic about Chief Osceola is that a First Nations person has never performed him.

The tenth picture depicts the Washington Redskins logo. Here, one interviewee chose “Wild Wild West,” three interviewees chose “Legacy of Conquest,” and one interviewee chose “Real American Indian.” What is interesting about this example is that despite all of the descriptions being comparable in terms of the number of thematic indicators used, there was wide variation that is comparable to the variation found in the responses to the Cleveland Indians logo. The one characteristic of this logo that makes it different from similar logos like the Cleveland Indians logo is the appearance of text in a language that is not English, and *which* appears to be some type of Native American language. Of the three interviewees who chose “Legacy of Conquest,” however, only one relied on a description that questioned this language. The other two interviewer descriptions did not go into detail about this text, and I believe that in the example where the language is mentioned, the notion that this is a dead language may have played a role in the interviewee’s response. It is difficult, however, to make statements about the other two examples where “Legacy of Conquest” was chosen because the descriptions are brief, rely explicitly on thematic indicators, and for this reason it seems like it would have made more sense for interviewees to choose the category “Real American Indian” based on trends identified in the choices of previous images. It is also interesting that the interviewee who chose “Wild Wild West” did so after hearing a description that was also brief and relied explicitly on the thematic indicators of “Indianness.” The interviewee who chose “Real American Indian” relied on a description that questioned the nature of the language found on the image, but the emphasis here was also clearly on the thematic indicators of “Indianness.” What is curious about this image is that I was expecting

extremely low variation among responses. It seems, in retrospect, that images that relied exclusively on thematic indicators of “Indianness” (and not some physical action or connotations of “nature” as in the Chief Osceola and Squaw Creek Farm logos respectively) had a higher variation of category selection because of the politically sensitive nature of depictions of Indians. I will return to this possibility later in this chapter.

The final image that needs to be discussed is the American Indian Family Center logo. Here, three interviewees chose “Real American Indian” and two interviewees chose “Ideal Nature.” In examples where “Real American Indian” was chosen, interviewees relied heavily on the descriptive emphasis on feathers. In the examples where “Ideal Nature” was chosen, the descriptive emphasis was on the connotations of family presented in the logo, where between four and eight people (depending if you interpret the picture as four people with shadows or eight individual people) are holding hands. Here, emphasis was also given to the fact that both sexes are presented in adult and childhood forms and that ethnic indicators are absent insofar as the silhouette image of the family(s) are in black and white, and presented in a way that does not suggest African or European ancestry.

NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ASKED BY EACH INTERVIEWEE

Prior to delving into the full analysis of the data, it is useful to outline the number of times that each interviewee took advantage of the opportunity to ask questions of the interviewer. In the first test, the interviewee did not ask any questions to help in choosing a category.

In the second test, the interviewee asked two questions. The first was for the interviewer to describe the clothing of the characters in the old Mountain Dew advertisement. The second was for the interviewer to describe the colors of the American Indian Movement logo.

In the third test, the interviewee asked a total of nineteen questions, with at least one question being asked for each image. Eighteen of the nineteen questions had to do with either the setting of the image (what is the background?) or the actions of the characters (is the character doing anything or what is the character doing?) The final question asked, however, (regarding the American Indian Family Movement logo) was based around the characters' ethnicity, when the interviewee asked, "Do the silhouettes appear to have any ethnicity?"

In the fourth test, the interviewee asked a total of fourteen questions, though a question was not asked after every description. The first two had to do with the actual test itself and how she should conduct herself. Most questions asked were about whether the image was a logo or an advertisement. She asked a question about the colors on the American Indian Movement logo. She also assumed that the eighth image, the photocell from the film "Toy Story" was from "Toy Story" when she asked (after the interviewer had only finished one sentence of description), "You mean Toy Story, the cowboy?" Finally, she asked for the ethnicity of the spectators in the Chief Osceola picture.

In the final test, the interviewee asked a total of twenty-three questions, with at least one question for every image. The variation on the content of questions was abundant. He asked questions about setting, colors, emotions (does the character look happy?), character actions, and ethnicity. This particular interviewee questioned ethnic descriptions six times. First, when dealing with the old Mountain Dew advertisement, the

interviewee asked, “Can you guess what part of the world they’re from?” Later, when dealing with the Chief Osceola photo, he asked, “So [you are looking at] a bunch of stereotypical Native Americans ready to conquer something?” This was followed by “Is the crowd Native too?” Then, in order to choose the category, he asked, “What’s more striking about the picture, the fact that he is an Indian, or what he’s doing?” Finally, when dealing with the Washington Redskins logo, he asked (after the interviewer said, “It’s a red-face Native male”), “Is it very stereotypical looking?” Not satisfied by the interviewer’s response he asked another question prior to choosing a category: “Is he archetypal?”

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Two main themes were the response to the blind test. I have dubbed these themes the “Ideal Cowboy” and the “Real American Indian.” These are congruent with the categories “Wild Wild West” and “The Real American Indian” in the blind test. The significance of these themes is that in both instances, the interviewer would oftentimes describe the depicted character in a way stereotypical for movies and television shows of the 1950s and 1960s. For this reason the two main themes are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they should be viewed as similar themes that play out differently. For example, both themes rely heavily on described garb. One female participant stated (when describing the Squaw Creek Farm logo), “We know she’s Native because of what she’s wearing.” This implies that there are clothing styles that suggest “Indianness” to the participant. Participants had a difficult time describing the logos for the American Indian Movement and the American Indian Family Center, perhaps because they do not portray the stereotypical Indian simulated in film westerns and television programs from the

1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, the Cleveland Indians logo, Squaw Creek Farm logo, Washington Redskins logo, and Chief Osceola, were all described as “Indian” because of the appearance of “Indianness” through the “total package” that garb is only a part of. This “total package” also includes skin color (variously described as red and brown) and hairstyle (braids or long black hair). The presence of feathers seems as, if not more, determinant as clothing, especially in descriptions of characters where clothing is not visible (the Cleveland Indians and Washington Redskins logos). Feathers may be more determinant than garb when considering that the American Indian Movement and American Indian Family Center logos both continue the use of feathers despite the former omitting all association with stylized clothing, but retaining skin color, and the latter omitting both clothing style and ethnic indicators. If feathers are still in use in images created by First Nations organizations during a time when other aspects of this “total package” are being omitted it can be assumed that they do not have the same negative connotations as those aspects that have been omitted. If this is the case then it has to be suggested that not every aspect of this “total package” is necessarily negative, even if feathers are also reminiscent of the entertainment mediums of the 1950s and 1960s. The Chief Osceola image, despite containing feathers also had the curious object of a flaming or the burning spear. This should not be confused with how participants dealt with the burning forest in the Smokey Bear advertisement, where most participants chose the category “Ideal Nature.” The use of fire in the Chief Osceola image, however, seemed to play a role in how participants chose the category “Real American Indian,” and for this reason should be considered as part of the “total package.”

Descriptions relating to the theme “Ideal Cowboy” were also heavily driven by garb. In almost every instance, an article often associated with “Cowboys,” specifically

“Cowboy hats” and “Cowboy boots” followed the use of the term “Cowboy.” Otherwise, the “Cowboy,” was only described as a “Cowboy” because of physical activity in the Wrangler Jeans advertisement, where a “Cowboy” is depicted roping a bull with a lasso. In every other example, the “Cowboy” was deemed a “Cowboy” because of his association with hats, boots, or spurs. Nevertheless, much like descriptions relating to the theme of the “Real American Indian,” the “Ideal Cowboy” must be understood in terms of a “total package” despite a lack of ethnic indicators in the descriptions. This does not mean that the stereotyped “Cowboy” is not ethnic, but it has to be remembered that all but one participant was of European Canadian ancestry, suggesting that participants did not need ethnic indicators because “Cowboys” are associated with this ancestry. This “Cowboy” stereotype relies heavily on notions of “Cowboyness” that stem from the same genre of films and television programs from the 1950s and 1960s as the abovementioned “Indian” stereotype. Evidence to support this comes from one interviewer comparing the Marlboro Man to Clint Eastwood. Regardless, this “Cowboy ‘total package’” is much more difficult to deal with than the “Indian ‘total package’” in terms of the descriptions because descriptions of “Cowboy” images in most instances were much shorter than their counterpart. This “total package,” however, should consider physical characteristics in addition to the already suggested ethnic indicators even though little was described about these qualities and for this reason little can be said about this “total package” here.

The “Real American Indian total package” goes farther than relying exclusively on the abovementioned qualities. Some participants associated or projected real or imagined knowledge about “Native things” in their descriptions. For example, one participant, when attempting to describe an arbitrary aspect of the American Indian

Family Movement logo, focused on a cross shape that is functionally designed to separate a color scheme in the logo, saying, "...It might not be a cross, like the directional four spirits or, four directions, or something." It is not important whether or not this feature has anything to do with these "four spirits:" the interviewer is attempting to project a "Native thing" onto a logo that, despite being made for and used by a First Nations organization, does not depict First Nations people in the stereotypical way.

This theme also unfolds in how people chose categories. As mentioned earlier, all but one participant was of European Canadian ancestry. The remaining participant was Iroquoian. The Iroquoian participant mentioned his ancestry prior to the commencement of the blind test. It could be suggested that this unique situation affected the way in which the interviewer described the images. The interviewer appeared to take greater care in selecting terminology in using the words "Cowboy, Indian, and Native," with the frequency of use being less frequent than in the other blind tests. The interviewer made several facial contortions when attempting to describe images in a way that was free of "ethnic indicators," and also had a high frequency of pauses in his description. The lack of ethnic indicators led the Iroquoian interviewee to choose the category "Real American Indian" when hearing the description for the Mountain Dew advert, which blatantly depicts European-Americans. The interviewer described the characters in the image in this way: "They're kind of dressed kind of like they're down in the dumps, run of the mill type people. Maybe a little short on cash. That's the way they look, I guess." The indicator of poverty and drinking an unnamed beverage led the interviewee to anticipate the stereotype of the "drunken Indian." After the test was finished, he was surprised to learn that the picture was of mountain people and not of First Nations people because on his anticipation of the stereotype. I do not think that the interviewee's response should be

viewed as a form of reverse discrimination, or a type of discrimination against a dominant group, due to his reaction of general surprise after learning the true nature of the image.

The fact that the interviewer in the abovementioned case avoided making comments based on ethnicity does not necessarily suggest a “critical gaze:” if the interviewee had not mentioned his ancestry, it could be expected that the frequency of ethnic indicators would be much higher, and that the flow of the descriptions would not have been so cautious. A “critical gaze,” however, was established in the second male blind test. In this situation, the interviewee asked many critical questions before choosing a category. Other interviewees rarely used the opportunity to ask questions before choosing a category, though some interviewees would ask for ethnic indicators if none were available. For example, when faced with choosing a category for the Mountain Dew advert, he asked, “...Can you guess what part of the world [that the people] are from?” The most important example of his “critical gaze,” however, comes from his attempt to categorize the description of the Chief Osceola mascot, where he asks if the picture shows “stereotypical Native Americans,” and finally, when forced to make his decision he based it on the interviewer’s answer to this question: “What is more striking about the picture: the fact that he is an Indian, or what he’s doing?”

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In almost every instance consistency in description led to consistency in categorical selection. Smokey Bear and the Marlboro Man serve as excellent examples: both were easily recognizable by participants but consistency in description was necessary for interviewees to realize that what they were interpreting was Smokey Bear

or the Marlboro Man. Since all five interviewees taken in the aggregate came to the realization that they were listening to a description of the Marlboro Man, all five chose the category “Wild Wild West.” Smokey Bear is an interesting example of this trend because two categories are extremely useful for interpreting this character based on how the image is described: “Ideal Nature” or “Legacy of Conquest.” In instances where the descriptive focus was on how the (un-named) Smokey Bear was warning against the destruction of the forest, participants chose “Ideal Nature,” while when descriptive focus was on the actual destruction itself, participants chose “Legacy of Conquest.” The abovementioned example of the Iroquoian man choosing “Real American Indian” when hearing a description of the Mountain Dew advertisement has as much to do with a lack of consistency in description as it does with interviewee anticipation.

Most participants did not differentiate between the stereotypical and the “real” “Cowboy and Indian,” but it is important to point out that this was not asked of them prior to the blind test. Only one participant consistently questioned the validity of these stereotypes in a critical way, and this was due to his rigorous questioning of the interviewer when trying to decide on categories (and even here, not every image was as rigorously questioned as others). This does not necessitate that interviewers accepted the stereotype as fact in the context of describing the images. Instead, they used the stereotype to make themselves clear to the other participant in the test. The interviewee should not be considered a passive participant: the onus (if there was any onus) was on the interviewee to challenge stereotypes as they were presented because the interviewer necessarily described the stereotype as it appeared for the sake of clarity. If the interviewee did not question described stereotypes then it can be expected that the stereotype was either accepted as valid, or was necessary for validating a chosen

category. In the rare instance where stereotypes were questioned by interviewees, this apprehension was only directed towards depictions of “Indians.” There were no examples of any interviewee calling into question the validity of the “Cowboy,” but this is not surprising in comparison to how the male focus group participants responded to the question, “Do you see any similarities between how ‘Cowboys and Indians’ are depicted in sports logos/mascots?” Here, male focus group participants suggested that “maybe some Texans take offense” to depictions of “Cowboys,” but suggested that depictions of “Cowboys” and animals in sports trademarks have less potential for harming what they try to represent, whereas depictions of “Indians” are more worthy of questioning. Yet, even when the abovementioned blind test participant critically challenged the stereotype of “Indian,” the interviewer in the test continued to attribute mythic qualities to the depictions of First Nations people. For example, when describing the Squaw Creek Farm logo, he said (in regards to a bird perched on the depicted woman’s finger), “It looks like, almost like, she’s having a conversation with the bird.” This description was reminiscent of “noble savage” depictions of Natives being closer to nature. The notion of the “noble savage” or a Romantic view of Natives permeated many of the descriptions. Another example of this trend comes from two different interviewers describing the image of Chief Osceola as a spectacle or festival as opposed to a sports event. In both instances, interviewers were hesitant in suggesting that what was taking place could have anything to do with mainstream sports, instead interpreting the image as depicting some part of an event that “Indians” participate in from time to time. For example, one interviewer stated, “This one seems to be like a, he’s in what seems to be a big football field, but it’s not your traditional sport that would be viewed at that. It’s like a Native American festival...” The second interviewer may have interpreted the image similarly, as he said,

“It seems like [Chief Osceola] is part of a spectacle.” In the latter example, despite the fact that the interviewee asked three follow-up questions, the interviewer did not suggest any connection between the image and any potential mainstream sport, except for when he said “It’s a Native man riding a spotted white horse in what looks to be a stadium of some kind.”

The lack of questioning directed towards descriptions of “Cowboys” must not be overlooked. Does this suggest that “Cowboy” as a category is less ambiguous than “Indian?” Does this mean that it is less politically sensitive? It is difficult to argue that the idea of “Cowboy” has the same degree of political sensitivity as “Indian” for a variety of reasons that I will discuss in the next chapter, but I do not think that this idea of “Cowboy” is therefore less ambiguous. If anything it is more ambiguous, it just doesn’t receive the same attention or have the same appeal as “Indian.” It is useful to reiterate an abovementioned quote from Jones (1970:ii) that helps illuminate this ambiguity:

...The public shows little interest in actual history, preferring to believe in a hero-dominated, romantic account of how a “superior” people (with whom the public erroneously associates) overcame in inferior one.

Although this quote is part of an attempt to demonstrate that the western genre has been hurtful for First Nations people because of a romanticized public view of “Indians,” it also hints at the lack of reflexivity directed towards both sides of the issue. The “Indian” gets more exposure and is talked about more often. An important question that will be addressed in the next chapter is “why?”

What is most important about the general scope of descriptions in all of the blind tests is that, rather than questioning the validity of what was being presented, all participants, including the Iroquoian man, perpetuated stereotypes based on what they

viewed as being necessarily “Indian” or “Cowboy.” Perhaps what has occurred is a general lack of questioning “distortions of reality” in favor of relying on the general societal category of “Indian” or “Cowboy.” This process may have a lasting effect on many young Canadians, regardless of ethnicity: to categorize “Cowboys” and “Indians” in a way that does not rely on stereotypes seems to be infrequent based on the small sample of blind tests that I have conducted. A good example of this possibility comes from one interviewer’s statement that the Marlboro man, “...kind of looks like Clint Eastwood,” one of the most iconic figures in Hollywood “Cowboy” films.

All participants made use of the stereotypes to communicate, but does this mean that they are perpetuating them? I believe that this is true for this reason: the lack of questioning outlined in the data section demonstrates that interviewees are more likely to take ethnic descriptions for granted than to question them. It is reasonable to assume that these types of depictions have bombarded participants in their everyday lives. The participant’s understanding of what makes a “Cowboy” a “Cowboy” and an “Indian” an “Indian” has already been shaped. As responses in the focus groups demonstrate, however, most people understand the difference critically; and yet, the descriptions in the blind tests suggest that people still rely heavily on these indicators, at least for the sake of description. This suggests that the idea of “Cowboy” and the idea of “Indian” as they have been mythically simulated to us through various media outlets continue to have a great deal of sway in how this particular sample of young Canadians understand this aspect of Canadian identity. Nevertheless, the blind test can only suggest this possibility based on statements like the abovementioned comparison between Clint Eastwood and the Marlboro Man. The shortcoming of the blind test in this situation is that it only shows that participants are perpetuating stereotypes, and how they go about perpetuating these

stereotypes based on their descriptions and questioning these descriptions. It does not allow for the researcher to understand explicitly why participants rely on the stereotypes in their descriptions, and it does not indicate that participants are passive readers of myth in the way that Barthes' proposes is necessary for a myth to maintain its power.

What is most compelling about the responses in both the blind tests and the focus groups is that no participant completely lacked a critical gaze, and no participant blindly relied on stereotypes all of the time. The most critical participants made statements that did not employ a critical gaze, and similarly, the least critical participants still made interesting critical statements. This suggests that myth reading is not as totalizing a practice as Barthes seems to suggest. The next chapter will attempt to present a means of dealing with this problem, while at the same time making suggestions about what it is that this particular myth, the myth of the "Cowboy and Indian" opposition, is trying to evoke to its readers. This final chapter will also make suggestions about how research that is simultaneously myth-based and image-based can be conducted if simulacra and myth are not being read as true by consumers.

CHAPTER 7: IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this thesis I have suggested that “Cowboy and Indian” related imagery distorts the past in order to present a fictional reality to contemporary consumers through trademarks (and in a less rigorous way, patents). I have traced this theoretically by emphasizing the simultaneous use of Baudrillard’s simulacra and Barthes’ theoretical approach to mythology for conducting image-based research (see Chapter 1). This project developed from research that I had previously conducted on Barbie dolls and “Cowboy and Indian” toys from the mid-twentieth century. I became interested in “Cowboy and Indian” imagery through the realization that most ethnic stereotypes have been abandoned in toys, with the exception of “Indian” based stereotypes. For this reason, I used toys as a springboard to investigate whether this has occurred in other visual media.

In Chapter 2, I addressed intellectual property law in Canada and the United States because of litigation surrounding the Washington Redskins football team and associated trademarks. This was a synchronic example that was useful for demonstrating that “Cowboy and Indian” stereotypes are still having an effect on North American society in a negative way. Negativity in this example stems from distorted understandings of First Nations people, with the term “Redskin” being of extreme importance due to the false claim by Pro Football, Inc., that the name honors Native Americans. An examination of historical events suggests that the term originates from and signifies the era of bounty hunting. Here the scalps of Native American “outlaws,” or

“redskins,” were seen as adequate substitutes to corpses by the American government in order to collect a bounty.

In Chapter 3, I discussed a seemingly dissimilar synchronic example that further demonstrated the contrast between historical events and contemporary consciousness. By examining a “Fort Apache” toy produced by Marx Toys, I was able to suggest that the way that “Cowboy and Indian” oppositions have been presented has little or nothing to do with the historical events on which these oppositions are based. “Fort Apache” is an excellent example for this thesis because it shows that the emphasis on stereotypical imagery supercedes historical events, consciousness, and documents insofar as most of what is presented in the toy is historically inaccurate (from containing plastic soldiers representing historical celebrities such as Bill Cody, George Armstrong Custer, Kit Carson, Sitting Bull, and Daniel Boone, all of whom had nothing to do with historical Fort Apache, to depiction of wooden stockades that were not built in Arizona’s arid climate).

The myriad of visual examples found in our society, from this “Fort Apache” toy to the example of the Washington Redskins litigation, suggests that myth is recurring through simulacra. This led me to address the history of “Cowboy and Indian” entertainment in Chapter 4. Here, I attempted to trace the way that “Cowboy and Indian” stereotypes changed over time from the development of *Wild West Shows* in the circus age through radio, cinema, pulp fiction, television, and toys; and how historical events became more distorted as visual media changed and the historical celebrities from the circus were replaced by fictional characters in the abovementioned media. In order to add more theoretical rigor to the approach that I developed in earlier chapters, I suggested that in addition to a theoretical stance that incorporates both Barthes’ mythology and

Baudrillard's simulacra, an approach that considers space-time compression as defined by David Harvey is useful because it allows for a more rigorous understanding of how the past is distorted due to the compression of space (despite the fact that we know where an item is made, items such as "Fort Apache" produced by Marx Toys present a distorted location) and time (the end of the railroad era and further advancement in communications and transportation allowed people to experience "Cowboy and Indian" stereotypes in the comfort of their own homes).

Feeling that the two synchronic examples and the diachronic example had demonstrated that myth-making and simulation were taking place, I developed two research projects (see Chapters 5 & 6) in order to test Barthes' theories about mythology and his insistence that people who accept myths are uncritical. The results from both projects suggest that Barthes' assumptions about uncritical readers of myth are not rigorous enough for the questions that I wish to answer: the most critical participants made very uncritical statements; likewise, the most uncritical participants made some very critical statements. One of the main goals of this concluding chapter is to suggest a way in which Barthes' theories can still be useful even though it may be possible that the reader of myths that he focuses on does not exist in an absolute way. I will return to this shortly.

There is another major goal in this chapter. Until now I have spent a great deal of time discussing examples of stereotypes in order to suggest that the "Cowboy and Indian" opposition is a simulated myth. This interpretation is what has driven this thesis from its inception. However, I have purposely avoided outlining what it is that this myth represents because (despite the synchronic and diachronic examples found in earlier chapters, and the obvious distortions of history and the reliance on stereotypes addressed

in these examples) what is being signified did not become entirely clear until after I had conducted the focus groups and blind tests. Most of this chapter will focus on the implications of both research projects because they generate new theoretical questions that a less rigorous study, which only focused on synchronic and diachronic material culture and trademark examples, could not achieve.

MYTH OR SOMETHING ELSE?

The main hypothesis of this thesis has been that young people are engaging the “Cowboy and Indian” myth in a way that lacks a “critical gaze.” Both research projects demonstrate, however, that critical thinking is taking place and that most participants do not accept the myth outright. In the focus group, most participants acknowledged that images depicted in sports logos are not adequate representations of reality (see Chapter 5). In the blind tests, despite the fact that interviewers relied on stereotypes to describe what was taking place, no one explicitly accepted the myth as true (see Chapter 6). This unexpected critical capacity causes problems for the way that the Barthesian myth is conceptualized. Barthes necessitates that myth-making can only take place once history has been distorted to the point where it is taken as natural. Yet, no participant misinterpreted the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition as being true. Therefore a problem arises: is myth actually taking place? How can a myth exist if people don’t take it as natural or true?

It is possible that Barthes anticipated this type of problem in his *Mythologies* where he outlines the three ways that a myth can be read (Barthes 1972:128). Is it a problem for a myth to no longer have any power or influence over people who are supposed to read it as myth? Barthes does not appear to see this as a problem, posing a

similar problem: “Either the intention of the myth is too obscure to be efficacious, or is too clear to be believed. In either case, where is the ambiguity?” (Barthes 1972:128).

Barthes addresses this problem by suggesting that it does not matter whether or not people believe the myth as long as they are capable of interpreting it: “This is but a false dilemma. Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession” (Barthes 1972:128). The difficulty for the mythologist is that Barthes presents three types of myth engagement (the person who produces myths; the person who demystifies; and the person who is a reader of myths, or who accepts them) (Barthes 1972:128). This is a problem insofar as Barthes appears to suggest that the latter of the three types of engagement involves a person accepting the myth uncritically. Yet, as the research results suggest, this type of uncritical acceptance of myth is highly unlikely.

In both research projects there were examples where the myth took precedence over reality: in the focus group one female participant claimed that “[Indians] don’t act like they used to anymore,” while in the blind test certain interviewers relied more on their ideas of “Indianness” in their descriptions of images than on what was actually taking place. An example of this trend can be found in the blind test, where two participants attempted to describe the photograph of Chief Osceola as taking place in a festival, or spectacle, instead of at a football game. This suggests that as much as myth is not being relied on or perpetuated, it still manages to have some effect. Myth is acting in a transient way, shifting from dominance to background, and vice-versa. It is not the all encompassing, overarching paradigm that Barthes suggests—or is it? Barthes presents myth as metalanguage. It is something that exists outside of the realm of the individual and all individuals must necessarily participate in it as metalanguage. Like any other language (or sign) it is not natural or predetermined. Instead, it is a learned characteristic,

something that has a lexicon of meaning: rules and exceptions to rules. Like language, it is not static but dynamic. Myth only makes sense if it is understood as something that can come into existence, gain dominance, change, mutate, lose its influence, and disappear.

There is a difference between the existence of a myth and people blindly accepting a myth as fact, and I think that this is one of the most important aspects of myth that both research projects support: the fact that all participants had some knowledge about the subject matter, “Cowboys and Indians,” demonstrates that they exist in, and understand, the metalanguage of the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition. Individual understanding of, and involvement in, the metalanguage demonstrates that the myth still has so much influence over people that the signifiers and signified(s) are recognized. No participant had to ask “what is a Cowboy?” or “what is an Indian?” Instead, all participants, moderators, and myself, the researcher have some knowledge about “Cowboys and Indians.” It is not important that some people have broader knowledge about a particular subject than others. What is important is that everyone understands and recognizes the signifiers. The “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is still a myth regardless of whether or not people accept it as truth: it is still engaging in a distortion of history. The myth occurs whether or not we believe in it; the trouble is in understanding why it can continue to be visually successful.

A DISAPPEARING MYTH? SPACE-TIME COMPRESSION REVISITED

The myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition did not appear to have much influence over participants in the research projects, but does this mean that it is in the process of disappearing? Despite this linear understanding of the path that myths must necessarily take, the “Cowboy and Indian” are still easily found in our contemporary

society. For example, the Washington Redskins football team, despite losing its legal battle with Harjo, is preparing training camp for the 2007–08 football season while it appeals the decision again. A more potent example is one that ties in with Harvey's space-time compression: the western is making a comeback in the world of video games, with a number of bestselling titles such as *GUN*²⁰ (Neversoft 2005), *Red Dead Revolver* (Rockstar San Diego 2004), *Samurai Western* (Spike 2005), and *Wild Arms* (Media Vision 1997) gaining large followings. The first two titles attempt to emulate the films of the 1950s and 1960s, but the latter two anachronize the past by having "Cowboys and Indians" exist in a world with modern day technology. This is an attempt to emulate the literary and film "Steampunk" genre. Steampunk is a marginal subgenre of fantasy and speculative fiction which came into prominence in the 1980s and early 1990s. The term denotes works set in an era or world where steam power is still widely used (usually the 19th century, and often set in Victorian era England) but with prominent elements of either science fiction or fantasy, such as fictional technological inventions like those found in the works of H. G. Wells, or real technological developments like the computer being invented at an earlier date. Since Steampunk as a genre relies on a specific type of anachronism, it should be seen as a type of space-time compression fantasy genre. *Samurai Western*, notably, compresses geographical space by having a "Samurai" becoming a "Cowboy" in the "Wild West." *Wild Arms*, however, is the most potent example of space-time compression in current "Cowboy and Indian" based video games: *Wild Arms* takes place in the world of Filgaia, a fantasy world modeled closely after the American Old West and Medieval Europe. The "Wild West" motif is present throughout

²⁰ It is interesting to note that *GUN* has become the subject of controversy because of the way that Apache peoples are depicted in the game. In January 2006, The Association for American Indian Development attempted to boycott the game when they opened the website "www.boycottgun.com"

the entirety of the game, and though several different landforms and climates exist across the entirety of the world, vast deserts, wide gorges, canyons, and sparse grasslands make up the majority of the landscape. A number of towns and villages exist, some containing old-world European architecture and castles, while others resemble early American frontier towns and trading posts. Technology at the time of the game is set around the early Industrial Revolution, with advancements such as motors first coming into use. There are four games in the *Wild Arms* series, and later games utilize the *Steampunk* genre more explicitly than earlier games. For example, in some later *Wild Arms* games, players are able to purchase automobiles and other transportation devices that were invented later historically in our world. In both *Samurai Western* and *Wild Arms*, the myth is perpetuated and is given new meaning through the distortion of space and time.

It is true that for Harvey space-time compression involves the disappearance of rigid boundaries of space and time due to advancements in transportation and communication. In his book *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, Harvey's focus is on capitalist and colonial projects (Harvey 1996). In this thesis I have not focused as much on capitalism as on myth. Nevertheless, the capitalist underpinnings of myth cannot be overlooked, and for this reason it is useful to return to the notion of commodity fetishism as discussed by Harvey. For Harvey, commodity fetishism involves multiple characteristics insofar as markets conceal social and geographical information and relations (Harvey 1996:232). The nuance of commodity fetishism involves the inability for consumers to know whether or not a commodity was created by a happy worker (an issue that is beyond the scope of this current research project), but also, the ability for a commodity to be distorted by its makers insofar as the product itself does not have to reveal any information about who made it or where it came from. As Harvey

says, “The grapes that sit upon the supermarket shelves are mute, we cannot see the fingerprints of exploitation upon them or tell immediately what part of the world they are from” (Harvey 1996:232–3). The idea of commodity fetishism (or at least the inability for some products to disclose information about who made them and/or where they came from) is useful for a study that simultaneously theorizes myth as something that contains Baudrillardian simulations and Harvian space-time compression. If material culture is something that contains a simulated message then it is necessarily participating in space-time compression because the simulated message is portrayed to consumers through one of a potential number of media forms that are themselves *simulation proper*, such as television, film, the internet, and even video games. Commodity fetishism is useful in this study, not because of the inability for the subaltern laborer to speak, but because of the inability for consumers to have a full knowledge of where an item was produced. This also happens in fictional spaces because of the public’s inability to grasp what distortions of space have led to the creation of such a fictional space. The fact that consumers do not know much about the people who produced consumed goods (from laborer to CEO), and do not know much about where a product is made, conceals the intentions behind the message that every trademark image contains. This is in fact a type of simulation that is necessary for every myth: the original referent no longer has an authoritative role, and the video games that I mention above could have come from anywhere, and could have followed trade-networks that prevent any discussion about where it came from because it came from many places. The fact that many of the “Cowboy and Indian” video games that I noted above participate in the *Steampunk* genre, in a world of anachronisms, illuminates the value of space-time compression in understanding myths. As Harvey claims, “The unavoidable fusion and confusion of

geographical realities, or the interchangeability of all places, or the disappearance of visible (static) points of reference into a constant commutation of surface images” is what space-time compression is all about (Harvey 1996:243). Yet, it is Harvey’s suggestion that “the lifetime of consumption of images, as opposed to more tangible objects, like autos and refridgerators, is almost instantaneous” (Harvey 1996:246). This suggests that there is value in focusing on image-based research and the messages that myths contain when studying space-time compression: images are consumed instantaneously and do not necessitate a monetary exchange.

What these types of video games demonstrate is that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition is not disappearing from our contemporary visual landscape. Instead, “Cowboys and Indians” have been so distorted and mutated over time through myth, simulacra, and space-time compression, that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition has maintained itself in fantasy genres. The myth is far from disappearing, and is as abundant as ever before, only it has been relegated to a different realm of experience than it was in the 1950s and 1960s, a realm that is more difficult to be taken seriously by consumers. Prior to discussing why myth is successful, the next section will address what the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” represents. This is useful because only after discussing what this particular myth represents is it logical to pursue questions about why myths are successful, and why there is value in studying myths.

WHAT DOES THE “COWBOY AND INDIAN” OPPOSITION REPRESENT?

I have avoided describing what I think that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition myth signifies because I feel that the signified of any myth can only be properly grasped after the process of demystification has been completed. Now that the process of

demystification has been completed through addressing synchronic and diachronic examples of stereotyped “Cowboys and Indians,” and through addressing these stereotypes in focus groups and blind tests it is possible to make statements about this particular myth. This should also be seen as a springboard for discussing the direction that myth-based and image-based research should take in future projects. I will return to this in a later section. The “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, as myth, has multiple signifieds, and it is useful to talk about the myth in three parts: first, what is the “Indian” signifying; second, what is the “Cowboy” signifying; and finally, what is the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition signifying? This is an important separation to consider when reading the following section: “Indians” and “Cowboys” signify something completely different than “Cowboys and Indians” together, even though what each side signifies separately has something to do with what both signify together. Nevertheless, all three constitute separate, but similar metalanguages: all three may be signs (as *first-order semiological systems*), but all three also come to signify something else (as *second-order semiological systems*).

Initially, the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition signifies that in life there are winners and there are losers. In this case the winners are always the “Cowboys” and the losers are always the “Indians.” Yet, as the *Battle of Little Bighorn* demonstrates (see Chapter 1), it is possible to find events where “Indians” were victorious. What occurs in stories such as the *Battle of the Little Bighorn*, however, is that the victors did not have the power to define or redefine history. Instead, particular victories take a backseat to the ultimate victory that the United States federal government achieved after the completion of the *Indian Wars*. The victors had the power to define history and the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition signifies this power to define.

Yet, when broken into parts, what is being signified in this myth is more than just a tale of winners and losers: instead the myth should be viewed as one that signifies exoticism. “Indians,” as signifiers, are the exotic, perpetually beyond the pale. They are absolute others, people that are so far outside of the realm of civilization that they are static; the epitome of savagery. The myth suggests that unlike all other humans, the “Indian” has been left behind. This is a myth about difference, and how exotic difference is an intolerable thing that must be confronted in order to win at life. The mostly male “Indian” loses because he does not fit into the mould of the victor’s society, and thus, must remain “wild” in the eyes of the victors, reflecting an outsider’s interpretation and power to define.

The connotations of exoticism and winning versus losing are aspects of a much more important signified: in order for North America to be what it is, a “superior” people had to overcome an “inferior” one. This is one of the most important aspects of this myth: this was the signified that enabled the United States federal government to achieve its goal of domination. North America is the result of colonialism, and the European-American majority would not be a majority without having been able to conquer its enemy. This is where the myth of the savage “Indian” stems from, and it has a necessary role in European-American society: it, as Taussig suggests, is a myth that allows North American society to gauge its success. North American society (American and Canadian alike) seems to rely on the concept that First Nations people were savages who stood in the way of progress as a means of verifying that both countries have a right to exist, and that colonial projects are beneficial for progress.

The role of the “Cowboy” in this opposition is harder to deal with, but I will attempt to make a few statements based on issues developed from the results of both

research projects. The reason why the “Cowboy” is more difficult to deal with is that, despite the fact that it is as fictional as the supposed “Indian” we are dealing with, it does not have the same historical resonance. The “Cowboy,” as I have suggested throughout this thesis, did not have any specific historical relationship to “Indians” during the *Indian Wars*. Instead, I have suggested that the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition stems from the *Wild West Shows* made famous by Buffalo Bill Cody. To say that the “Cowboy” has nothing to do with the “Indian,” however, does not help this discussion because of the way that the opposition has been built over time. It is my belief that the “Cowboy” has come to signify all of those things that the soldier does, such as patriotism, law, order, and heroism. Yet, the “Cowboy” signifies characteristics that the soldier cannot, especially when one considers that the soldiers of the nineteenth century do not resemble the soldiers of today due to technological advancements that have changed the way that wars are waged. The “Cowboy,” on the other hand, signifies the frontier, a way of life that has disappeared, but remains prominent in the minds of many European-Americans/Canadians because of its connotations of success. It is also useful to point out that the “Cowboy” by definition is a type of shepherd, and whereas a soldier is responsible for death and destruction (in order to create order), the “Cowboy” is a creator of life, and is responsible for transforming the exotic, the “wilderness” into civilization by maintaining his cattle. As a creator, as opposed to a destroyer, the “Cowboy” lives a life that no soldier can ever obtain. It is also useful to note that the *Wild West Shows* emphasized the skill of the “Cowboy” from trick shooting to riding, making the “Cowboy” a symbol of how North America was able to transition from “wilderness” to “civilization” through the skill and cunning of frontiersmen.

When viewed in this way the “Cowboy” is as necessary an aspect of the myth as the “Indian:” they are polar opposites in terms of the myth. Where the “Indian” is an exotic, savage “other” that hinders development, the “Cowboy” is a skilled champion of civilization and progress. It does not matter that this is a complete distortion of reality: this is a myth that favours the victor over the loser, not only because the myth is about winners and losers, but also because the myth is about the success of colonization and the success of European-Americans/Canadians over whoever dared to stand in their way.

MYTH AS A NECESSARY ASPECT OF COMMUNICATION

The fact that the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” was used for the sake of description in the blind test does not indicate that stereotyping was taking place. Though it is impossible to rule out the potential for stereotyping in describing myths such as the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition, the act of stereotyping is not a necessary aspect of perpetuating the myth. It is true that myths rely on stereotypes insofar as stereotypes are distortions of reality, but this does not necessitate that any participant was blatantly relying on stereotypes in a totalizing way (though there were some stereotypical comments made in both projects). What is important is that myths, in general, are necessary aspects of human communication. For example, in the blind test the myth was used in order to describe what was taking place in each picture. It was impossible for the interviewer and interviewee to not rely on the myth for description because the myth had already been appropriated at some point in the lives of each participant. Every North American should know exactly what “Cowboys” and “Indians” are supposed to be (as opposed to what they are) based on the visual stereotypes that have been presented to us

throughout our lives. This is why the “total packages” of “Cowboy” and “Indian” are such important indicators of “Cowboyness” and “Indianness.”

The fact that everyone involved in this project knew exactly what it is that is supposed to connote “Cowboyness” and “Indianess” demonstrates the power of myths: we don’t even have to believe in myths for them to exist; instead we have to understand the rules and conduct of the myth, much like the anglophone must understand the rules and conduct of the English language in order to communicate with other anglophones. What is particularly interesting about myths in general is that they, as metalanguage, transcend geographical areas that have linguistic boundaries through the visual characteristics that constitute the myth. What is troubling about myths is what to do with them once they have been demystified: for Barthes demystification is the most that anyone interested in examining myths can accomplish. It has been suggested throughout this thesis that a more useful approach to demystification is to simultaneously address the historic processes that led to the naturalization of the myth through its epistemological recurrence and ontological simulation, and to assess whether or not so-called “readers of myth” engage these myths uncritically. But, what is the point of demystification? Is it just a type of butterfly collecting? Or does it have a beneficial use, not only for social science research projects, but for the general public?

CONCLUSIONS

The fact that the simultaneous goals of this project reveals that “readers of myth” do not blindly accept myths as fact as much as they rely on them for communication within the metalanguage of myths suggests that Barthes’ assumption that there are blind readers of myths may be incorrect; such readers are, at the very least, difficult to locate.

His suggestion that a myth can be demystified through an examination of the historical processes that led to its creation, however, appears to be a useful proposition, one that I have used in addressing the synchronic and diachronic examples presented in chapters 2, 3, & 4. If myth is viewed as a necessary aspect of human communication, as suggested above, then Barthes' suggestion that "readers of myth" necessarily accept the myth as true gains some ground. Nevertheless, the acceptance of myth is not a blind acceptance of a false "truth", so much as it is an acceptance of the language that is the myth. The "Cowboy and Indian" opposition myth is only one of a potentially infinite number of myths that has gained success. I believe that this is where a myth gains its most influence: most people do not appear to accept the myth as fact, but most people do not want to put the effort into understanding the "truth." This is a statement that could be applied to any other myths that people confront in their everyday lives. Examples could be found almost anywhere. This is why Barthes is able to successfully make statements about the mythic qualities of things as different as wrestling and the face of Greta Garbo in the same collection of essays (Barthes 1972:15–25, 56–7). When viewed in this way a myth is akin to the "telephone game" that children play: the original referent is simulated, distorted, and presented as a naturalized "truth" within the realm of metalanguage and is communicated in a variety of ways. Where Barthes appears to fail is in his insistence that people must necessarily accept the truisms of the myth in order for the myth to gain influence. It is more likely that no one has to believe that the myth is true for it to be successful. Instead, the myth must be compelling enough to constitute a metalanguage that people take as an unproven knowledge, akin to "hearing something through the grapevine." A myth, like gossip, is nothing more than an interpretation of truth, one that has been simulated to the point where the original referent no longer has

any potency or authority. People believe what they want to believe, and appear to accept aspects of a myth more readily than the myth itself. Yet, the acceptance of knowledge of this kind can never be a full acceptance. Myth rarely (if ever) constitutes a totalizing mutiny of truth: no one ever seems to believe a myth outright.

FUTURE RESEARCH

If myth is not something that people take as absolute fact then what is the point of demystification? Is it a useless approach that only allows for researchers to understand that myths are taking place? Or is it a useful approach that allows for researchers to go beyond merely acknowledging myths, instead allowing for the ability to question the purpose of certain depictions that may be potentially harmful for people, places, and things? This is a dilemma where each path is equally important for validating myth-based and image-based research. Barthes' position that demystification is only possible through historical analysis is useful for historical studies intent on understanding how certain simulations have gained prominence over time. Yet, this does not allow for the researcher to make any statements other than "such and such is a myth" or "myth is taking place." This is not an adequate venture if a researcher intends to call into question myths because of potential harm. As the Washington Redskins example demonstrates, myths can be harmful for some people and for this reason an approach to demystification that challenges myths because of potential harm is necessary. In this thesis I have addressed this necessary goal of demystification by assessing the critical gaze of a variety of young people in New Brunswick, Canada, only to find that despite the myth, all participants had some kind of critical gaze (at least regarding this particular myth). This may or may not be the case if other myths are researched similarly, but it must be

expected that the critical capacity of people engaging myths is simultaneously one that does not accept the myth as fact, but one that relies on the myth for communicative purposes.

Yet, if people do not accept the myth as fact then how is it harmful? This is a problem that can only be understood by addressing the potential for harm: a myth is not harmful in and of itself, but has the potential to be harmful insofar as the myth has the capacity to be taken as fact, and prevent the transmission of facts by encouraging the transmission of myth. Participants did not view the “Cowboy and Indian” opposition as factual, but this does not mean that other people are not engaging this myth as fact. Unfortunately, to suggest that some people may be taking this myth as fact is difficult: this has not been demonstrated in either research project. Nevertheless, this is a possibility that must remain open: the subjects in this study are not the universe of North American or Canadian society, and almost everyone who I have ever spoken to about First Nations people claims to know someone who has a negative image of “Indians” and could care less whether or not that is a politically incorrect opinion in our contemporary society. It is useful to consider that some people are attempting to grapple with discrepancies between these kinds of stereotypes and their understanding of history and cultural differences.

In order for future research into simulated myths to have any meaning it is necessary for such projects to take into consideration the implication that regardless of the myth, as something that is simultaneously epistemological and ontological, myths do not necessarily lead to harm. Thus, any study of myth and act of demystification is only useful once harm has been demonstrated. If, for example, the myth of the “Cowboy and Indian” was not wrapped up in connotations of exoticism, colonialism, and the othering

of “Indians” as antagonists in a world of protagonist “Cowboys” that have led to harmful depictions of “Indians” that leave First Nations people disparaged, then there would be nothing to talk about. Without demonstrated harm demystification is akin to butterfly collecting insofar as the mythologist demystifies for the sake of demystification and nothing else. This butterfly collecting is all that Barthes seems to think that demystification is good for, but as I hope that this thesis has demonstrated, demystification is useful for understanding the processes that have taken place in the constitution of a myth once that myth has been deemed harmful. Future research into myths must therefore have the purpose of understanding their potential for causing harm, especially when one considers that anything can become a myth. Otherwise, there is no point to demystification.

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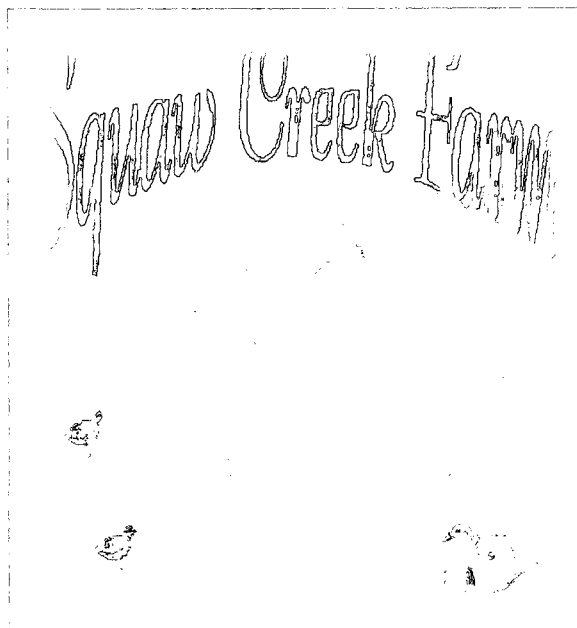
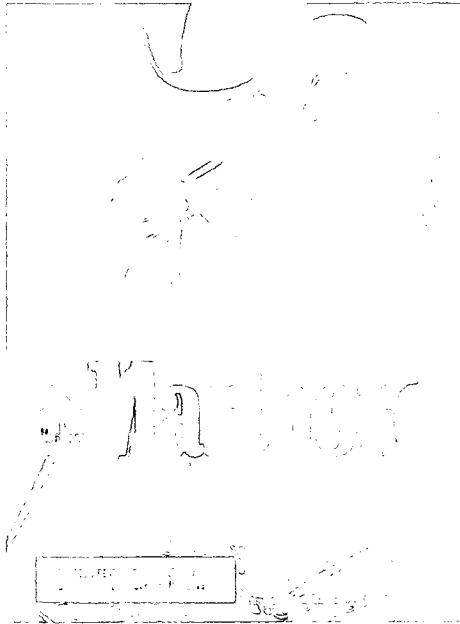
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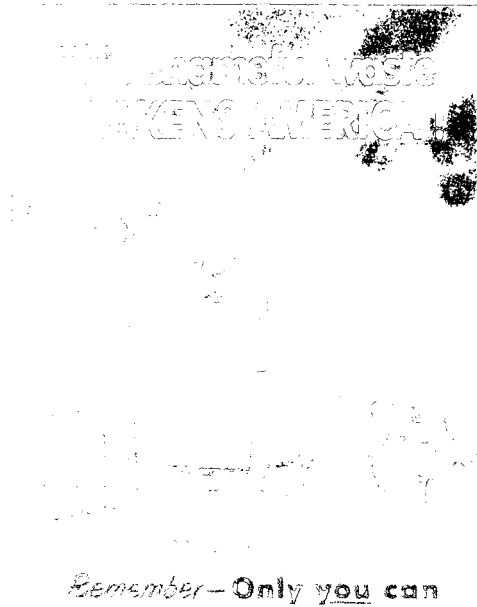
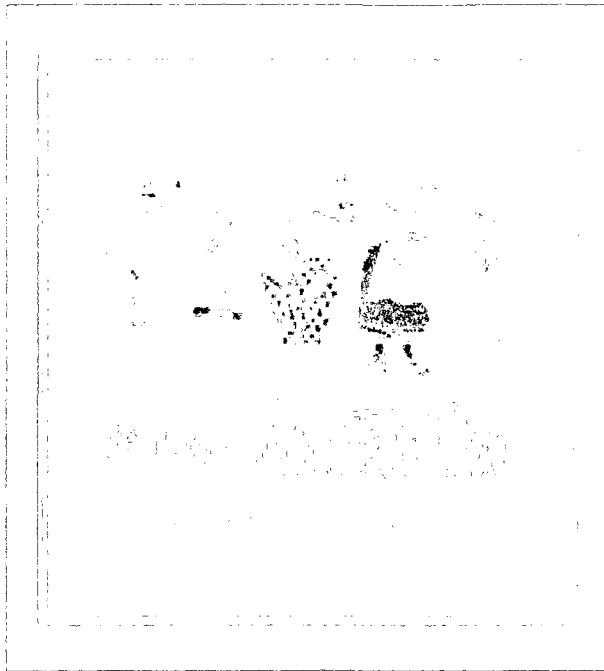
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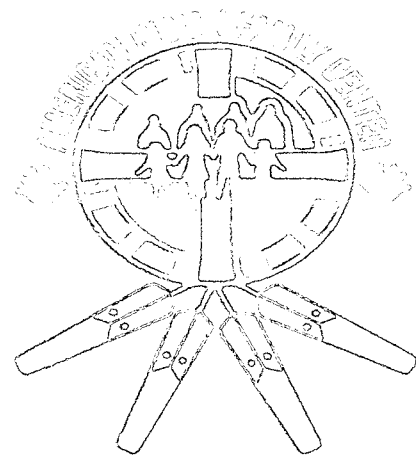
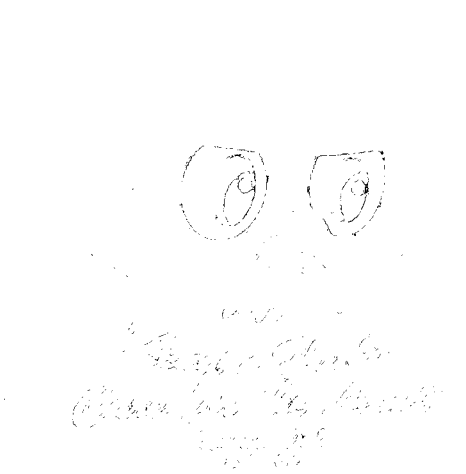
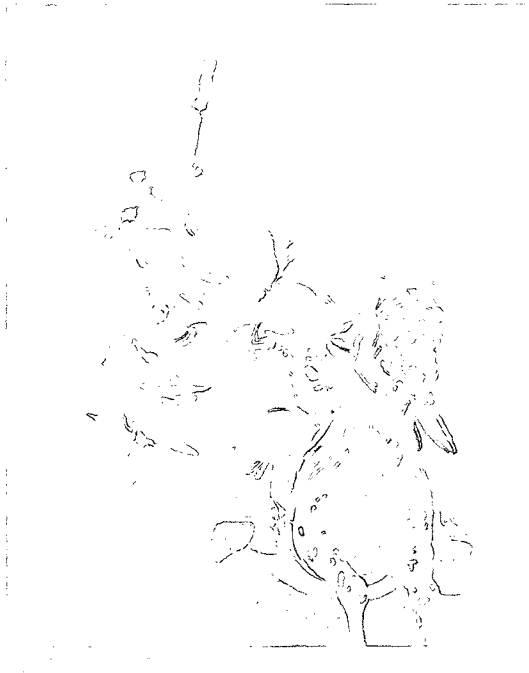
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APPENDIX A: BLIND TEST IMAGES

The following twelve images were used in the blind tests. Please refer to Chapter 6 for a discussion of why these images were used.







Closeup of Graphic on Front

APPENDIX B: BLIND TEST CATEGORY DOCUMENT

This is the document used by interviewees in the blind test. Please refer to Chapter 6 for further details.

PLEASE CHOOSE ONE CATEGORY THAT YOU THINK BEST SUITS THE
DESCRIPTION

PLEASE PLACE EACH ILLUSTRATION INTO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING
CATEGORIES:

THE WILD, WILD WEST	IDEAL NATURE
THE LEGACY OF CONQUEST	THE REAL AMERICAN INDIAN

CURRICULUM VITAE

brian Campbell

Universities Attended:

St. Thomas University – Fredericton, NB
Bachelor of Arts – First Class Honors in
Anthropology
2001-2005

Conference Presentations:

- Campbell, brian (2005) "Phantom Analysis: The Absence of Representation as a Form of Representation in 1980s *Ghostbusters* Merchandise" St. Thomas' 1st Annual Ideas Fair. Fredericton, NB, March 2005.