LEASHING THE DAWGS: A STRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF SPORTING-EVENT

TAILGATING AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, ATHENS,

2000-2007

by

GILBERT LEROY LITTLE III

(Under the Direction of Jay Hamilton)

ABSTRACT

Society is an ever-changing compilation of cultural forms and civic relations that shape who we are and what we do. The study of popular culture enables a deeper understanding of the often overlooked elements at work in this fundamental communal process. This study uses ideological analysis to reveal key structures within media coverage of the tailgating debate and to explore their significance within a broader social context. The analysis uncovers two key structures used in these media texts that make tailgating meaningful: while the contest structure used to organize the debate produces oppositional sides constantly at war with one another, the consensus structure produces paradoxically a unified social whole among the entire readership. This study discusses the implications of this seeming contradiction and how the construction of tailgating as a social problem provides a better understanding of the deeper ways in which the social order is produced and enforced.

INDEX WORDS: tailgating, social problems, popular culture, structures, Hall, ideology, articulation, ideological analysis, social order

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DEDICATION

Thank you to my parents, whose constant love and support have gotten me to this point in my life. You have allowed me to walk along my own path without questioning where it leads, and for that I will always be grateful. You both have taught me more than you'll ever know.

Thank you to Rebecca and Lotty—without you both, I would not be where I am today, nor would I be who I am.

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I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Christa Ward and Dr. Peggy Kreshel for always providing insightful instruction. Your willingness to be a part of this project is very much appreciated, and I thank you both for making me think more critically about my study and about society.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Nothing, save perhaps the belief that the Civil War was fixed,
> is more ingrained in the Southern psyche than the love of college
> football. What other institution can you name that would make
> an otherwise normal, intelligent individual bark like a dog?
> —Sportswriter Tony Barnhart

> College football is about tradition. This struck at the very heart
> of that tradition. As long as it's here, people are still going
> to hurt. People aren't going to wake up next season and say,
> 'Gee, the administration was right.'
> —A fan's reaction to restrictions on tailgating at UGA

It's a cool, crisp morning and the crowds have already begun to arrive. People set up their tents, fire up their grills, and ice down their beverages. Although the competition on the field does not commence until early evening, the parking lots fill up hours in advance in anticipation of a long afternoon with family, friends, and food. The reason so many have come so early is not to merely watch a game, but rather to participate in the tailgate.

Perhaps no event is more associated with tailgating than college football, especially college football in the Southeast (St. John, 2004). For many tailgaters, the practice is a way of life, a ritual enacted several times over each autumn, passed on from one generation to the next. Sleepy college towns are transformed into bustling metropolises, inundated with fans of the competing football teams, people who have come to witness and partake in both the tailgate party and, in some cases, the game itself.

While many people believe tailgating is a worthwhile celebration, others view the activity as a growing social problem. Authorities have cracked down on tailgate parties in an effort to limit the detrimental possibilities created by such an intemperate affair, using such measures as increased ticketing, parking restrictions, and designated times when tailgate parties can begin. Media coverage of the ensuing social debate has emphasized the vociferous nature of the discussion through its demonstration that, in some circles, the practice is perceived as a threat to order and civility while in others it is recognized as a perennial public ritual that needs no reform.

This thesis is a study of the cultural production of tailgating and its place in the broader social order. In this chapter I will provide background information pertaining to the tradition of tailgating and the debate over its practice at the University of Georgia. I will begin with a consideration of the institutional roots of tailgating by tracing the history of this tradition and how it has developed into a widely-accepted and broadly-practiced activity. I will then discuss the evolution of tailgating at the University of Georgia through a recapitulation of the actions and events that have transpired to constitute the practice as a social problem. The second chapter will explain the conceptual framework that grounds this study within key critical and cultural traditions and the analytical procedures used to conduct the investigation. In the third chapter, I will discuss media coverage of the tailgating debate and analyze its social implications. The final chapter will review the entire study and discuss its general significance.

The institutional emergence of tailgating

With the popularity of intercollegiate athletics—and football in particular—increasing throughout the twentieth century, universities soon realized the potential for lucrative gains that

campus sport offered. Decreases in government funding for state-run universities during the latter half of the twentieth century and into the new millennium have precipitated the need for effective capital campaigns aimed at raising money for universities across the United States (Toma, 2003). Fundraising is an essential element of American higher education and the prospective value for a university's fundraising efforts of bringing thousands of people to a central campus to cheer on their favorite team cannot be understated (Toma, 2003). College football is thus a big business, and the revenues acquired from ticket-holders and wealthy donors have ramifications that reach far beyond enhancing a university's athletic endeavors to impact student enrollment, donations for academic programs, additional resources that can be applied to strategic goals, and the university's overall regional and national reputation. Toma (2003) contends that "football has […] evolved into perhaps *the* key point of reference to, and involvement with, the university for many of the people on whom institutions rely on for support [...] through using spectator sports in external relations" (p. 142, original emphasis).

The practice of tailgating as we recognize it today evolved from centuries of sports spectating, beginning in ancient Greece. Guttmann (1986) traces the act of observing participants in athletic competition to the first Olympic Games held in the eighth century B.C. These Olympics were religious events meant to appease the Greek gods and celebrate the role of athleticism in Greek culture. It was not until the emergence of staged chariot races and gladiatorial battles in the Roman Empire that sporting events were presented solely for their entertainment value (St. John, 2004). Rowdy crowds entered cavernous coliseums located throughout the Roman Empire in order to cheer on the competitors and witness extraordinary feats of athletic achievement. This tradition of fandom continued up through the Renaissance and

the Middle Ages, where fans were notified of impending jousting and archery tournaments months in advance, thus increasing attendance figures at these sporting events (Guttmann, 1986).

The first instances of modern-day tailgating emerged from the tradition of picnicking at horse races and rowing events during the Victorian Era in Great Britain when "sport […] assumed [its] characteristically modern form" (Guttmann, 1986, p. 83). Spectators brought their own food and drink while they observed the contests along with thousands of others. The growth of soccer (known as "football" to the rest of the world) at the turn of the century contributed to the birth of widespread fanaticism of a particular club based on regional allegiances, the likes of which reached new levels of activity (Dunning, Murphy, & Williams, 1988). An expansion in crowd populations led to the social stratification of sporting events in Great Britain, as audiences of some sports consisted of upper and middle class members while audiences of other sports were made up of the lower classes. This class division was related directly to the class membership of the participants of the event—wealthy athletes competed in elite activity celebrated by other wealthy spectators (Guttmann, 1986). Thus, sport perpetuated economic divisions between different social classes, reinforcing existing social conditions of the Industrial Era in Great Britain.

The first documented evidence of a tailgate party in the United States occurred in 1869 at the first collegiate football contest between Rutgers and Princeton (St. John, 2004). The tailgating tradition was established in the Northeast and was related to the growth of college football on the campuses of Harvard, Yale, Penn, and other Ivy League universities.

In the United States, college football and tailgating have become synonymous in the decades since that first game, resulting from a relationship between the two that transpired from a calculated effort by American universities towards "building these institutions, enhancing

collegiate life, and establishing places like Harvard and Yale in the popular culture" (Toma, 2003, p. 3). The growth of intercollegiate athletics enhances institutional status and increases the opportunities for resource acquisition for universities, with college football as the most lucrative of the NCAA-sanctioned sporting events. According to Equity in Athletics Data provided by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the United States Department of Education, the University of Georgia ranked fifth in the nation for revenue generated from its football program during the 2003-2004 academic year with profits totaling $42,104,124 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2007). While the majority of these earnings remains within the athletics department, the recognition and exposure that a successful football program brings to an academic institution produces major financial contributions that directly contribute to overall institutional well-being.

Tailgating in the Classic City

It is against this backdrop that the practice of tailgating has become an annual tradition at college campuses across the nation. NCAA Division 1 football is a billion-dollar industry, and the faithful followers of numerous college teams make their way to campuses where they once studied to enjoy the festivities with past and current students alike. Tailgating is a communal affair, providing "a way to make the precious few games on the schedule stretch into daylong affairs, where strangers form a community around food, drink, and the beloved home team" (Wilgoren, 2002, p. F1). At the University of Georgia, Dawg fans come from across the state of Georgia to participate in the game-day events, reenacting a scene that has been performed for decades. As Barnhart (1986) notes, "Georgia fans have gained a reputation for coming early and staying late" (p. T2). At the University of Georgia, tailgating is as much a staple of the game-day ambiance as the game itself. It is a tradition spanning generations of Dawg fans from various

backgrounds, suggested by Range's (1986) vivid account of a tailgate party at a Georgia home football game from his youth in the 1970's:

> Football reigned as the supreme cultural event of Athens life. It was a measure of the school's prominence […] with each passing Saturday serving as reason enough for Georgia fans to set up along the sprawling campus and stake their claim to being a part of the glorious afternoon exercise. No matter who you are or what corner of the state you call home, on this day all are a part of this Southern tradition. (p. C5)

Tailgating is a principle element of the football culture at the University of Georgia, an institution that in many ways depends on fans of its athletic teams to make significant contributions towards its academic and financial progress.

Although many people believe tailgating is a worthwhile celebration, others view the activity as a growing social problem. Authorities at the University of Georgia have started to crack down on tailgate parties in an effort to curtail the potential harm caused by morning or afternoon outdoor partying. It bears noting that this developing perception of tailgating as a problem at the University coincides with the perceived growth of student drug and alcohol issues and the efforts to combat such student issues. A brief review of the setting, actions, and events that detail the identification of tailgating as a social problem affords a contextual reading of coverage of the debate, enabling an understanding of the developments that have ensued up to the present.

The University is located in the heart of the lively community of Athens, a town nestled in the foothills of Northeast Georgia. Known for its vibrant cultural scene, Athens is annually-rated as one of the top college towns in the United States (Ballard, 2003; Jones, 2006a). The downtown scene is a conglomeration of shops, eateries, and bars that fill up nightly with students

filing in from campus. At its roots, Athens is a community rooted in youth culture in all its excesses and extremes, and the local economy depends upon the energetic nightlife to remain afloat. The city also depends upon the profitability of football weekends, evidenced in Executive Director of the Athens Downtown Development Authority Art Jackson's statement that "[t]he way other businesses look to Christmas, we look to football" (Schneider, 2002, p. H1).

Prior to 2000, there were no documented restrictions on football tailgating at the University of Georgia. Towers (2006) remarks that "[f]or years, the Georgia campus had been known as a tailgating paradise" (p. A1). Anyone willing to arrive early enough could park anywhere on campus to set up their tailgate parties. Coverage of tailgating before this time period focused on either the joys associated with coming to the game and cheering on the football team (Range, 1986; Blaudschun, 1999), assorted game-day activities occurring around campus (UGA homecoming activities, 1999), or romanticized versions of tailgating rituals (Barnhart, 1986; Wilbon, 1986; Jenkins, 1999). In short, coverage of this nature lauded the benefits of tailgating for all parties involved.

In 2000, the University unveiled a new parking plan for football game-days, limiting parking in areas of central campus to donors willing to pay at least $1,100 to the UGA Athletic Association for a spot (McCarthy, 2000). In October of that same year, elated football fans stormed the Sanford Stadium field after a victory over the University of Tennessee. Monetary damages incurred by the University exceeded $80,000, as the hedges that line the playing surface as well as both goalposts had to be replaced.

The expansion of Sanford Stadium in 2003 increased the seating capacity to over 92,000 people. Markiewicz (2003) believes that this expansion, coupled with the construction of new academic and housing buildings to accommodate a growing student enrollment, exacerbated the

strain on available game-day parking. Due to these factors, only approximately 13,000 on-campus parking spaces were now available for the over 75,000 fans who come to Athens on game-days (Markiewicz, 2003).

The NCAA hosted a Sportsmanship Summit in Dallas, Texas on February 20, 2003, to discuss the increasing number of incidents involving unruly fans at intercollegiate sporting events, similar to the events that occurred at the University of Georgia three years prior (Shipp, 2006). The symposium, which was attended by commissioners from the major athletic conferences as well as NCAA-sanctioned representatives, focused on developing strategies to promote the positive aspects that make college football popular, while identifying and eliminating negative features intrinsic to the culture of the sport. Alcohol and its excessive consumption were identified as a major culprit of fan and student misbehavior.

According to Simmons and Jones (2005), the University of Georgia experienced a 40% increase in alcohol and drug-related arrests from 2003 to 2004, an alarming statistic for an administration already attempting to assuage the notion of a party school culture at the University. The journalists note one of the contributing factors to these statistics: "[u]nlike downtown, there are no laws against having an open container of alcohol on the campus, which is state-owned" (Simmons & Jones, 2005, p. A1). In response to these escalating figures, administrators announced that students under the age of twenty-one that violate the drug or alcohol policy for a second time would now have their parents directly contacted by the University to notify them of their children's actions (Simmons & Jones, 2005). Prior to this policy change, parents were not contacted by the University if such actions occurred.

In November 2005, Provost Arnett Mace ordered deans at the University to track down professors that cancelled classes in the days leading up to the Georgia-Florida contest held

annually in Jacksonville, Florida (All work, 2005). The command stemmed from the administration's insistence that "an unwavering commitment to scholarship isn't apparent when classrooms empty out a day early so students get three days off instead of two to go to Jacksonville" (All work, 2005, p. A10). On November 12, 2005, students and fans exiting in the aftermath of a close loss against Auburn University trashed the UGA campus, providing "the catalyst" for a project commissioned by administrators that would limit tailgating practices on game-days (Towers, 2006, p. A1). One month later, University administrators announced that any underage student caught drinking alcohol on campus would be arrested and sent to the Athens-Clarke County Jail (Simmons, 2006a). At that time, President Michael Adams released his first public comments on the student alcohol issue, stating that "[w]e've had some incidents […] Happily, we haven't had a high level of high-profile incidents" (Simmons & Jones, 2005, p. A1).

On January 22, 2006, Lewis Fish, a nineteen year old student at the University of Georgia, was found dead in his dorm room at Russell Hall (Simmons, 2006a). A subsequent toxicology report revealed that Fish overdosed from a potent mixture of alcohol, heroin, and cocaine. Police soon charged seven University students with misdemeanor alcohol and drug offenses in the wake of the tragedy (Simmons, 2006c). A few weeks later, the University announced the creation of the John Fontaine Jr. Center for Alcohol Awareness and Education, established through a $2 million endowment (Simmons, 2006d). Fontaine, whose father is a UGA alumnus and whose brother currently attends the University, was killed by a drunk driver in 2001. The stated mission of the new center is "to broaden the services [the University] already provides—including education and counseling—and help students learn how to make better choices" about alcohol use (Simmons, 2006d, p. D1).

In March 2006, administrators announced a series of restrictions entitled "Gameday Gameplan" that would affect tailgating in the coming football season (Simmons, 2006e). The stated policies include: no tailgating on-campus before 7 a.m. on Saturdays, no tailgating in parking spaces, parking banned on sidewalks and grassy areas with towing strictly enforced, the installation of more garbage cans and portable toilets to alleviate game-day trash issues, limited access to public buildings, and no fan access to UGA electrical outlets. In addition, family-friendly tailgate zones were created in the North Campus Quad area as well as on the D.W. Brooks Mall; the consumption of alcohol is made strictly prohibited from these designated areas.

The University hosted a town hall meeting on April 5, 2006 to discuss underage and binge drinking issues affecting the campus; the headliners in attendance at the discussion were President Adams, Vice President for Student Affairs Rodney Bennett, and Head Football Coach Mark Richt (Simmons, 2006f). Later that same month, administrators once again announced a change to the student drug and alcohol policy (Simmons, 2006g). Any underage student with a second offense of being in possession of alcohol or drugs would now be suspended. Additionally, parents would now be contacted after an underage student's first violation of the policy and each subsequent time for all students—including those over twenty-one—after their second alcohol or drug violation.

In August 2006, administrators voiced their displeasure over articles in *The Red & Black* student newspaper that seemed to promote alcohol consumption; they also spoke out against the inclusion of advertisements for alcohol specials and bail bondsmen in coupon books given to students when purchasing their textbooks (Jones, 2006a). Soon after these public denunciations, the UGA faculty and teaching staff received a letter from the administration, imploring them "to avoid making jokes or telling humorous stories involving alcohol consumption" while in the

classroom (Jones, 2006a, p. A1). The letter also instructed professors "to keep their Friday final exams and establish expectations of attendance—and not to change their schedules because 'you expect [students] will party too much on a Thursday night'" (Jones, 2006a, p. A1).

The University of Georgia opened its first football season with the new tailgating restrictions in place on September 2, 2006. Scott (2006) contends that, despite the policy changes, "the outdoor party carried on as usual" (p. E1). On October 6, 2006, the John Fontaine Jr. Center for Alcohol Awareness and Education officially opened inside of the University Health Center (Jones, 2006b). Later that same semester, Georgia played the University of Florida in Jacksonville for the first time since President Adams' public demands that media refrain from referring to the annual rivalry game as "The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party," its unofficial moniker since the 1950s (DiRocco, 2006; Anderson & Jones, 2006). Despite these restrictions on both activity and appellation, the administration continues to be frustrated by behavior at football games, recently discussing the possibility of revoking the ticket privileges of certain misbehaving fans (Rowdiness could, 2007).

Why, after all these years and presumably after decades of exuberant or deplorable examples of tailgating, has tailgating now become defined as a social problem? And, more importantly, how might the construction of tailgating as a social problem provide insights into the maintenance of the broader social order?

Purpose of study

This study explores the implications of the cultural construction of social problems, using tailgating at University of Georgia home football games as a case study. This study will approach tailgating and its construction as a social problem in order to explore how tailgating might

articulate dominant power. The restrictions on tailgating at the University of Georgia have emerged out of a pre-existing system of rule and order, a system that depends for its stability its acceptance as common-sense and necessary. Tailgating is not the focus of this thesis; rather, I will approach tailgating as a site through which the exercise of dominant power occurs. Using Hall's concepts of ideology and articulation as the theoretical approach, my study utilizes ideological analysis to reveal key structures in newspaper texts that determine the means through which tailgating has been constructed as a problem.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & STRATEGY OF ANALYSIS

This chapter will discuss the critical and cultural approach that informs this study and describes its implementation in the analysis. I begin with a characterization of previous research on tailgating in order to demonstrate how this study both builds upon this foundation while differentiating itself from previous efforts. I then move to a discussion of previous literature pertaining to the construction of social problems, thus providing an understanding of the framework through which scholars have considered other topics that became defined as social problems. I will then discuss other studies of popular culture that have shaped the critical and cultural field, changing the research focus from studies of mass culture to studies of the popular. After describing this shift, I move to a consideration of cultural studies approaches to understanding popular culture and how the current study can be situated within it. After positioning this study within the realm of critical and cultural studies, I will discuss my theoretical approach through the identification of tailgating as an articulation of the implementation of dominant power. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strategy of analysis used to perform this study.

Tailgating, the construction of social problems, and the study of the popular

The range of studies pertaining to tailgating share a similar perspective, viewing the tradition from a constricted focus as a cursory practice worthy of mention only in its relation to a much larger activity or phenomenon. These studies use empirical means to determine a variety of

outcomes, all of which deem tailgating as a perfunctory issue. Cunningham & Kwon (2003) conclude that, when considering profitable campaigns for increasing attendance at collegiate athletic events, "athletic departments could possibly encourage tailgating" as one of these methods (p. 141). Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak's (2003) study of fans as tourists determines that tailgating before the big game "is very much an integral ritual" but that municipalities like Athens should concentrate more efforts into understanding the "values and behaviors of sports tourists [the opposing team's fans who travel to support the visiting team]" in the hopes of maximizing game-day profits (p. 188). Tailgating has also been analyzed as a specific event associated with high-risk drinking behavior (Neighbors, Oster-Aaland, Bergstrom, & Lewis, 2006), a singular factor in the much broader issue of alcohol incidents on college campuses. These studies demonstrate the narrowly-constructed visage of tailgating in previous research and its standing (or lack thereof) in the positivist academy.

This study approaches the practice of tailgating from a different perspective, one that recognizes its cultural element and takes a critical-cultural approach towards its study. In order to understand the role of tailgating as a social problem, I must consider a variety of studies that have grappled with other issues that have also been studied as culturally constructed social problems. This brief review characterizes the theoretical perspective that previous scholars have used to consider issues that became defined as social problems, yielding a framework that I can build on for my own approach to analyzing the construction of tailgating as a social problem.

Studies analyzing the cultural construction of social problems, although encompassing a vast research spectrum, share one universal theme: the importance of creating common-sense beliefs that reaffirm the status quo in the hopes of furthering social control. Transforming certain aspects of society and morality into common-sense beliefs forms power differentials that make it

easier to establish "dominance over civil life and society through *the combination* of modes of consent and modes of coercion—but with *consent* as its key, legitimating support" (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978, p. 209, original emphasis). Thus, dominance and popular agreement to it is essential to the reinforcement of the status quo. Enforcement can be accomplished through a variety of means, including an increased police presence, the passage of new laws restricting previous freedoms, and the marginalization of those members of society who refuse to adhere to such legislation. Becker (1963) contends that when previously inoffensive actions are culturally constructed as problematic, it becomes apparent that "social rules, far from being fixed and immutable, are continually constructed anew in every situation, to suit the convenience, will, and power position of various participants" (p. 192). Acland's (1991) study of the "preppy murder" in Central Park found that "[a]s metaphors, labels, and descriptions become attached to [an] event […] a site of concern is constituted around which energies can be mobilized" (p. 156). These mobilized energies further repress the stigmatized subject creating a moral panic characterized by contempt and fear that alters normative social action. Thus, an act or belief that is socially constructed as a problem benefits the interests of the status quo. It is through the fear of being deviant—and, more specifically, being publicly labeled a "deviant" and all the sanctions that go along with it—that most in society act in accordance with the tenets of the status quo (Foucault, 1978; Horowitz, 1993).

The social construction of social problems exists in turn as part of the vast array of studies pertaining to popular culture. However, popular culture has not always been a key point of emphasis in the critical tradition; instead, the study of the popular emerged as a reaction to the previously prevailing paradigm of the mass-culture critique. Studies of mass culture dominated the social-scientific landscape prior to the critical and cultural shift towards investigating the

popular. Lippman 's (1932) seminal study of post-World War I American society examined the ways in which the media influences and shapes the public opinion of the masses. The public was conceptualized as a compilation of passive and naïve media consumers who could be greatly affected by media messages (Lippmann, 1932). The work of Adorno and Horkheimer followed in the mass culture tradition, constituting the culture industry thesis as the Frankfurt School's interpretation of the effect of cultural productions on the general public (Hardt, 1992; Gunster, 2004). This belief maintains that the commodification of culture plays a pivotal role in the enforcement of standard ways of living among all peoples while homogenizing society in the process (Hardt, 1992). In general, studies of mass culture view the variety of cultural forms as serving a singular purpose: to produce and perpetuate capitalist society.

The shift in the emphasis from mass culture to popular culture correlated to the influence of the Birmingham Centre in cultural analysis. Popular culture becomes an important focus of study through Hall and his colleagues' insistence that "[t]he changing balance and relations of social forces throughout [...] history reveal themselves, time and again, in struggles over the forms of the culture, traditions, and ways of life of the popular classes" (Hall, 1981, p. 227). From this perspective, "the field of culture [is] a sort of battlefield […] where no once-for-all victories are obtained but where there are always strategic positions to be won and lost" (Hall, 1981, p. 233).

Yet, its approach was subject to a number of critiques. Gunster (2004) believes that the Birmingham Centre approached the study of culture from a valuable, but restricted perspective, choosing "to focus on the *specificity* of cultural and ideological formations, rather than the relation between culture and the economy" (p. 179, original emphasis). The calculated decision to concentrate on specific structures differentiated it from its predecessors and contemporaries of

the mass culture tradition: instead of examining the ways in which people and their cultural productions are limited by the surrounding base, Hall and his colleagues attempted to identify "the internal codes and structures that govern autonomous cultural practices. For it is these codes that actually make culture possible" (Gunster, 2004, p. 181). Social formations were no longer seen "as whole and coherent: either wholly corrupt or wholly authentic," but rather "deeply contradictory" cultural forms whose contradictions both generate and conceal the "uneven and unequal struggle, by the dominant culture […] to disorgani[z]e and reorgani[z]e popular culture; to enclose and confine its definitions and forms within a more inclusive range of dominant forms" (Hall, 1981, p. 233).

However, the value of the study of popular culture is its in-depth study of previously unidentified positions that were either overlooked, undervalued, or generally thought to be unimportant. The difference in approach between mass culture and popular culture is not a rejection of previous methods; rather, it serves as a re-conceptualization for studying social formations separate from the hindrances posed by economic reductionism inherent to previous forms of analysis often used in the study of mass culture. And studies of popular culture themselves are often more nuanced than they are given credit for. For example, while they underscore the belief that, while people do produce their own cultural formations and utilize commercial culture for individual use, they often also note how these activities are limited by external forces that regulate the conditions in which they occur.

Thus, while validating popular resistance, they also recognize that social forces constantly pressure people into acting one way or another; thus, people are both free and not free to act whichever way they please. Willis' (1977) analysis of young, white working-class men in Britain reveals that these individuals' recognition of the world of work and their role in it

represents an accommodation to their social situation that reifies their position in society. The acceptance by these men of their fates "constitute[s] an aspect of the regeneration of working class culture in general [...while serving...] an important function in the overall reproduction of the social totality and especially in relation to reproducing the social conditions for a certain kind of production" (Willis, 1977, p. 3).

Similarly, Radway's (2002) study of the romance novel concludes that the personal space that women gain from these readings does not respond to the patriarchal sexual division that produces their world. In fact, structures contained in these works "are not merely the analogical representation of a preexisting sensibility but a positive agent in its creation and perpetuation" (Radway, 2002, p. 318). Women who engage in romantic fiction do not do so in an act of resistance towards the sexual inequalities that comprise the social order, but rather as an accommodation of the very nature of this reality. And Morley's (1992) work concerning the *Nationwide* audience suggests that audiences do not interpret messages whichever way they please; rather, their readings are patterned by "cultural differences embedded within the structure of society [...and...] produced through the interaction of the codes embedded in the text with the codes inhabited by the different sections of the audience" (p. 118). These studies demonstrate that while popular culture can oftentimes serve as an expression of individual emotions or beliefs, it cannot shield us from the effects of the larger pressures that shape society. In a sense, resistance is futile.

This literature demonstrates several different fundamental positions that ground my study. First, the practice of tailgating has only been examined through the positivist framework; consequently, the potentials of its research have been limited to a certain degree. Second, the cultural construction of social problems has been previously analyzed in various arenas,

emerging from the conceptualization of studies focused on popular culture. Issues that were once not considered problematic became defined as such because of the importance of creating common-sense beliefs that reaffirm the status quo. These studies also establish the principle that social control is at the heart of defining a popular tradition as a problem. People cannot simply do whatever they want because larger pressures limit their available activities and shape the social conditions in which these activities happen. Labeling certain acts as deviant is itself a means of social control through the implication that there is a pre-existing standard of behavior that we should be practicing in order to avoid becoming a social outcast. What still needs to be done to add to this literature is to extend the focus to new areas of study, areas where such frameworks have not been previously considered. The previous literature pertains to topics that have long been associated as social problems. In order to broaden the research area, a study investigating a present topic of concern provides a more recent example of the construction of a once seemingly innocuous subject matter as a serious social problem.

Theoretical perspective and research questions

This study of the cultural construction of social problems is grounded in the literature of cultural studies. Suffice it to say, cultural studies is a hugely diverse and contentious project. The diversity of the tradition contributes to the difficulty in defining cultural studies. Nonetheless, a commonality of research in the cultural studies tradition is the focus on the interaction "between social relations and meanings—or more exactly on the way social divisions are made meaningful" (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske, 1994, p. 71). Cultural studies is dialectical in nature, providing a way of looking at the world as a contested compilation of negotiated meanings, where "we make culture and we are made by culture"

(Storey, 1996, p. 11). Meaning is negotiated at a variety of cultural sites, with discourse seen as one of the most pervasive.

The meaning-making process is neither rigid nor fixed in cultural studies; rather, "it is always a site of potential conflict" (Storey, 1996, p. 4). Conflict arises from the arbitrary nature of meaning, as the meaning of a certain text or production can be interpreted in a variety of ways that nevertheless are not infinite in variety. Storey (1996) details the combative nature of cultural studies, stating that "the field of culture is for cultural studies a major site of ideological struggle; a terrain of 'incorporation' and 'resistance'" (p. 4, original parentheses). Power relations play an integral role in this struggle over meaning, and a central principle of the cultural studies tradition is "that the production of knowledge is always done either in the interests of those who hold power or those who contest that hold" (O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 73). The moral point of critique enabled by cultural studies is that power differences in society "produce asymmetries in the abilities of individuals and social groups to define and reali[z]e their needs" (Johnson, 1996, p. 76). Cultural studies attempts to identify and explore these power differences and ask questions about their role in the existing social order.

Cultural studies does not limit itself to constructing categories of what is and is not appropriate for study; rather, it is inherently inclusive by nature with topics ranging the vast spectrum of cultural locations. Sparks (1996) maintains that "it is possible to locate the origins of cultural studies in a rejection of a particular dominant notion of culture" (p. 15). The inclusiveness of cultural studies was bred from its inception as a research tradition, as it emerged from a refusal to concentrate solely on high culture. Cultural studies is particularly interested in the study of popular culture and how meaning is constructed within the texts, productions, and practices that are produced and reproduced in contemporary society (Storey, 2003). Popular

culture is not immune to the manipulation of power differences in the process of meaning-making; instead, it is a cultural battleground where the ideological struggle over meaning is constantly contested between "the forces of domination" and everyone else (Storey, 2003, p. 89).

As a central purveyor of popular culture, media constitute a site of conflict where this ideological struggle is waged. While the notion of a free press remains an everlasting principle inherent to the freedoms associated with American society, the media do not consistently challenge prevalent world views. In her summary of key sociological studies of newswork, Eliasoph (1988) concludes that this work emphasizes how reporters "usually tell stories in a way that does not seriously question the society's dominant way of seeing" (p. 313). In his discussion of Fiske, Storey (2003) notes that "the official press […] provide the information and knowledge necessary to ensure the maintenance of the prevailing structures of power" (p. 89). A variety of factors combine to work toward ensuring this maintenance of power, including certain "organizational constraints, economic constraints […] general 'values' in the news […and…] literary constraints" (Eliasoph, 1988, p. 314). These factors create a level of "political complacency" in the media in which the inevitably repetitive ways of news-gathering and reporting lead to the press' compliance with and perpetuation of the status quo (Eliasoph, 1988, p. 313).

Where cultural studies roundly critiques claims of powerful and manipulative messages and passive audiences, it nevertheless claims that dominant interests work culturally, but at a level much deeper than "meaning." For example, the routine nature of news-production plays an important role. In his assessment of television news coverage, Connell (1980) purports that the structure of the coverage is itself coercive: the arguments made take the form of objective, transparent representations of the sides involved while masking "the specific structuring

accomplished by the broadcasters" (p. 147). Since the audience is constructed as a neutral observer articulated to authenticate facts, the media gain substantial power through the very way accounts are organized and made sense of. Gitlin asserts that the press' use of prescribed literary conventions to "cover the event, not the condition; the conflict, not the consensus; the fact that 'advances the story,' not the one that explains it" furthers the existing social environment by preserving the right of authoritative social groups to have their voices heard while suppressing minority opinion (quoted in Eliasoph, 1988, p. 313). Thus, from this perspective, the press—sans publications anarchist in nature—help reaffirm the status quo, maintaining existing social formations that serve to benefit dominant interests.

Nonetheless, because meaning is continually and individually negotiated, the messages constructed from discourse created by the popular press have the potential for challenging the present power structure. Discourse circulated by newspaper and magazine texts relating to the practice of tailgating is capable of supporting the existing hegemonic social order; likewise, it is also capable of contesting it. The use of a cultural studies approach in this analysis allows me to investigate in ways deeper than a focus on questions of "meaning" allows how common sense is produced by constraining and channeling meaning-making in particular ways.

A perspective amenable to such an intention is grounded in the concepts of ideology and articulation developed by Hall, whose belief that ideology is a productive force was influenced by the differing ideological positions of Althusser and Gramsci. These scholars formulated their positions by working through the Marxist perspective, always mindful of "the ideological control which the economic, social-institutional and technological spheres […] exercise" (Haslett, 2000, p. 54). Because of the Marxist influence on cultural studies and the continual development of the concept of ideology (Mouffe, 1979; Boothman, 1995; Storey, 1996), it is necessary to briefly

consider the classical Marxist conception of ideology. A simplified interpretation of the Marxist position views ideology as a misrepresentation of reality created by a distortion of market relations meant to deceive people, creating a false consciousness through which the masses can be controlled (Larrain, 1991). This simplified framework views cultural structures (superstructure) as by-products of the economic structures (base), both of which supporting interests of the dominant groups in society.

Althusser's view differs radically by posing a relative autonomy to the superstructure and, thus, to ideology. This view is based in a structuralist perspective, and maintains that ideology can neither be avoided nor contained. Instead, ideology is practiced daily through existing structures in society and perpetuated through these same practices (Kurzweil, 1996). These structures combine to form what Althusser terms the Ideological State Apparatus (including but not limited to the family, the church, the educational system, and the media), which, when teamed with the Repressive State Apparatus (government, police, courts, etc.), functions as a means through which "the State exerts power over its citizens […] to ensure that [the State's] mode of production […] continues to function smoothly" (Haslett, 2000, p. 60). In this sense, ideology as a diffuse practice not under the personal control of anyone benefits— whether implicitly or explicitly—the dominant interests in society.

Bogues (2005) contends that Althusser views ideology solely "as a structure […] that operates only at the level of reproduction" (p. 75). We can never experience true reality because the only possibilities of known experience are represented and reproduced through ideology (Kurzweil, 1996). Althusser disagreed with the economic reductionism inherent to the Marxist concept of superstructure: cultural structures are not merely a consequence of the economic factors in society, but part of an active, continually reconstructed reality that occurs due to a

multitude of factors (Kurzweil, 1996). Ideology from an Althusserian perspective is the manifestation of this totality and cannot be separated from the practice of everyday life. People work within the system to formulate new ideas, but do not necessarily change the overall structure of society.

Gramsci's view of ideology also differs from that of Marx in that he did not agree with the notion of ideology as misrepresentation contributing to false consciousness. Instead, he believed that ideology could not be separated from the real and the imaginary: it is as real as any other human production (Gunster, 2004). It is actively produced and "must be seen as a battlefield, a continuous struggle […it…] organizes action" (Mouffe, 1979, p. 185-6). Ideology consists of the struggle between competing factions for control: it cannot be essentialized into an orderly, compact concept. It binds people together through the "ideas, beliefs, representations, and practices" (Haslett, 2000, p. 57). There are a multitude of cultural sites at various levels of society where the struggle over ideology occurs; nonetheless, the majority of its participants are unaware of their role in the effort (Fontana, 2006).

Gramsci saw a discord between individuals' beliefs and actions. People do not necessarily act in accordance with their personal beliefs. Ruling classes exert and maintain their influence "not only through domination but also through intellectual and moral leadership" (Haslett, 2000, p. 56). Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony in order to describe this exercise in cultural power by the capitalist bourgeoisie over both the working class and petty bourgeoisie, "not only through its control over the means of production, but also […] by making concessions to such a degree that its hegemony became the dominant common consciousness" (Bouillon, 2004, p. 241-2). The ruling class maintains its power over other social groups because it is willing to meet some of the demands of the majority in order to perpetuate and extend its

authority (Mouffe, 1979; Fairclough, 1995). Thus, hegemony is not a monolithic concept based on rigid class structure; rather, it is continually (re-)constructed through material practice. Gramsci's concepts of ideology and hegemony emphasize their active nature: people reify their importance through daily social practice.

Hall develops his concept of ideology by working through the positions of Althusser and Gramsci, extending the relationship between ideology and hegemony further in his contention that ideology both reflects and constructs hegemonic positions in society (Gunster, 2004). According to Gunster (2004), "the most sophisticated accounts of hegemony shift the focus away from the actions of rational agents towards the role of culture in establishing the very foundations of what is considered rational" (p. 209). For Hall, ideology has the power to extend beyond class interactions and "both penetrate and permeate social life […due to…] the nature of language" (Bogues, 2005, p. 76). Structures of language and meaning ensure the maintenance of unequal social relationships that reinforce the dominant's control of society. Importantly, Hall does not dispense with the base/superstructure conception so much as he recasts it as reciprocal. The maintenance of dominant interests in power sustains the existing economic base—and, by transference, the cultural superstructure—that support this power, subjugating subordinate classes in the process (Hall, 1986a). The reciprocal nature of this relationship accounts for its continual production and reproduction.

Like Althusser and Gramsci, Hall advocates an anti-reductionist and anti-essentialist position, seen through his development of the concept of articulation. Slack (1996) contends that "[a]rticulation is […] not just a thing (not just a connection) but a process of creating connections" (p. 114, original parentheses). It consists of the construction of various social parts that allows for the subject to view these independent entities in a unified manner. Storey (1996)

asserts that articulation is a way "to explain the processes of ideological struggle […] meaning has to be expressed, but it is always expressed in a specific context, a specific historical moment, within a specific discourse(s)" (p. 4, original parentheses). Articulation posits that the most effective strategy for critical social analysis is to work through the differences evident in cultural practices. For Hall, articulation is a method for seeming contradictions to be thought of as coming together (Slack, 1996). Gunster (1996) notes Hall's position on the importance of differences in comprehending social formations: "the accurate representation of a particular totality requires that its unity be defined not through the identification of similarities between its various moments or elements […] but rather through their differences" (p. 184). It is from these differences that meaning materializes.

An illustration of articulation as a theoretical and analytical tool involves Hall's critique of traditional methods for studying communication and communication theory (Slack, 1996). In his appraisal, Hall breaks down the traditional sender-message-receiver model, contending that each component is itself an articulation, with the sum of the parts coming together to form a larger whole. From this new perspective, Hall advocates "a rethinking of the process of communication not as correspondence but as articulation" (Slack, 1996, p. 124). Thus, articulation posits a particularly useful way to understand a social formation by focusing on the differences and articulation of its individual parts and the contextual nature of its existence.

Grounded in this ideological premise, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the primary ways that tailgating has been represented in local newspaper accounts pertaining to its practice at the University of Georgia?

RQ 2: What are the key structures that organize coverage of the tailgating debate?

RQ 3: In what key ways do these structures produce tailgating as a social problem?

RQ 4: What are the key social implications of the process of producing tailgating as a social problem?

Strategy of analysis

This study examines how tailgating has been constructed as a problem by analyzing the ideological structures that organize discussions of tailgating. Structures that organize the composition and interpretation of texts constitute the reading of these materials within frameworks that produce particular meanings. I use ideological analysis because it allows me to identify such structures and determine how their implementation affects the tailgating debate. Since no specific text "is exempt from ideology, there is at any one time numbers of competing ideological discourses in play within an overall social formation" (O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 142). These discourses produce meaning that relates knowledge and power to the cultural forces in competition through their production, regulation, institutionalization, and resistance (O'Sullivan et al., 1994).

The particular approach employed in this study differs from other forms of textual analysis through its emphasis on intertextuality, or the way that the meaning of a certain text is constituted through the relationship of that text to others (Kristeva & Moi, 1986; Fairclough, 1995). This concept is affirmed through the analytic premise suggested by articulation: namely, that meaning is created through relationships. These relationships are generated through the differences with meaning emerging through comparative formations (Fairclough, 1995). Where paradigmatic relationships materialize through similarities or differences in kind, syntagmatic relationships form out of differences in sequence or order.

In addition to attending to such relationships, my analysis will also attend to what is included and what is excluded—the "structured absences" as taken-for-granted assumptions omitted from texts. For example, Macherey advocates that "we should seek to read the text's internal contradictions, fragments, and gaps in 'productive' ways […] it is in the gaps and

indeterminacies of the text that ideology can be known" (quoted in Haslett, 2000, p. 67). These gaps can provide valuable insight into the social groups that may be excluded from a social practice and the implications of this exclusion. Thus, the critical interpretation of these omissions is integral in the effort to determine the way that these structures shape social reality. The relationships formed paradigmatically, syntagmatically, and through structured absences set boundaries—who can participate in the tailgate and who cannot, which actions are acceptable and which are not—and it is by normalizing these boundaries that power is exercised.

To gain a better understanding of how these relationships shape coverage of the tailgating debate, I analyzed a total of fifty-four newspaper articles pertaining to the construction of tailgating as a social problem, ranging in dates from 1986 to 2007. These articles were retrieved from three separate locations: the LexisNexis online database, the online archives of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and the online archives of *The Athens Banner-Herald*. The recency of the subject matter and the overall dearth of articles pertaining to tailgating at the University of Georgia accounts for the sample start date, as this appears to be the earliest that journalists began to document the practice. Additionally, although the University of Georgia maintains a daily student newspaper, it was not used in this particular sample due to a readership consisting mainly of students and faculty—and a small percentage of these entities at that—and an overall perceived lack of quality. Instead, the sample consists mainly of the two daily newspapers with the largest readerships in the Athens area in order to garner a sense of how the tailgating debate has been covered within the larger community, consisting of local Athenians, Georgians statewide, and the students, faculty, and administrators that comprise the University.

In order to identify the ways in which key structures work through language, utilizing the paradigmatic relationships, syntagmatic relationships, and structured absences manifest in

newspaper accounts of tailgating, I analyzed each text and determined how these elements combine to form structures that represent tailgating as a social problem. After collecting the material, I went through each account separately, noting the various paradigms, syntagms, and structured absences contained in the coverage. In order to ascertain paradigms within the texts, I considered similes, metaphors, comparisons, parallelisms, and equivalencies that provide an understanding of tailgating in relation to its various associations. Syntagms were identified through lists of words, claims of cause and effect, stories, and chronologies that produce meaning sequentially. Structured absences were interpreted through intertextual means: as I continued to read through the various texts, it became apparent that there were certain stories that did not align with what others had claimed, that contradictions existed within certain stories, and that certain stories did not make sound, logical arguments. From these absences, I was able to extrapolate different ways that key structures operated to produce an understanding of tailgating within newspaper accounts documenting the debate.

After going through the accounts and identifying the various relationships contained within the coverage, I noticed discursive patterns emerging from the texts that combined to constitute the primary structures in the tailgating debate. These structures define the coverage within a framework that can be easily comprehended by potential readers, shaping the tailgating issue as an extension of the prevailing social belief system. Conventions of language within newspaper accounts of tailgating confirm Schudson's (1988) claim that the use of standard journalistic practices in news gathering and reporting "help make culturally consonant messages readable and culturally dissonant messages unsayable" (quoted in Eliasoph, 1988, p. 313).

The paradigmatic, syntagmatic, and structurally absent relationships identified in the accounts place the major social parties and their actions within the primary structures that define

the dimensions of these relationships. Newspaper texts concerned with tailgating are more than individual descriptions pertaining to the topic; rather, these texts embody and circulate structures through which tailgating is made intelligible. As such, the individual positions of specific journalists are not relevant to this study: while each journalist may view the issue through his or her own independent stance, the combined coverage produced through their individual efforts manifests and attests to the pervasiveness of these structures. Grossberg (1996) contends that "[c]ulture is the site of the struggle to define how life is lived and experienced, a struggle carried out in the discursive forms available to us" (p. 158). By examining newspaper accounts of tailgating, this analysis enables an understanding of the various forces at play in the struggle over a specific practice of popular culture.

In this chapter, I have laid the groundwork for the forthcoming analysis into the cultural construction of tailgating as a social problem and its subsequent social significance. This study works within the critical and cultural tradition in order to investigate the struggle over popular culture in an area that has to date been unexplored. Previous research into the construction of social problems established how innocuous activities are transformed into identified problems, compelling individuals either to adhere to new legislation or become publicly labeled as social deviants while further solidifying the imbalanced relations between social groups. Additionally, through the routinization of news making and reporting, the press plays an important role in the strengthening of the dominant position: messages from the mainstream media neither question authority nor offer alternative options in the struggle over power, thus affirming existing social conditions. Hall's concepts of ideology and articulation provide an understanding of newspaper accounts of tailgating as sites of contestation and manipulation where language plays an active role in the battle over meaning. From this perspective, coverage of the tailgating debate is more

than just a description of events; instead, it is the site where popular culture is currently being transformed. By examining the tailgating debate and the key ideological structures that manage its discussion, the nature of this struggle can be established and a better understanding emerge.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I will discuss key structures that make tailgating meaningful. While this selection of accounts contains an array of varying details, together they embody the critical structures that produce the key ideological implications.

Let me first provide a sense of the overall analysis. Newspaper accounts of tailgating are organized by traditional reporting norms such as the use of objectivity and the presentation of both sides of an argument. Stories embody these norms by demonizing administrators, students, or fans in so as to represent a struggle between contending social groups. Thus, the coverage structures the relationships between parties as a contest by presenting each side, describing their relevant arguments and actions, and, after each successive episode of their meeting, evaluating which side has the upper hand.

At the same time, the contest structure does more than simply organize the ongoing dispute between sides. By not only disclosing fan criticism of President Adams and the administration's restrictions, but also by including detailed accounts and implications of the debauchery of both student and fan behavior, the structures that organize the coverage present these debates and differences as able to be publicly expressed and accommodated. More broadly speaking, while the contest structure divides the social whole into warring factions with close-to irreconcilable differences (with the newspaper positioned as a neutral party), it also portrays the accommodation of such differences within a larger social whole. Because this battle takes place

in a very public forum, the coverage by virtue of its publicness reconciles differences within a broader consensus, while, by extension, promoting the virtues of pluralist society and of a commercial newspaper's role in it.

To demonstrate the ways in which these structures work, I will first examine the contest structure that produces the oppositional sides, which consist of university administrators versus students, university administrators versus parents, and university administrators versus fans. The analysis then moves to a discussion of the consensus structure, which is produced through two distinct audience positions. Where the first position utilizes directives and second-person address to encompass the reading audience within the practice of tailgating, the second position is constituted by assuming prior knowledge of the issues and of standard explanations of the parties involved. The analysis concludes by examining the implications of this seeming paradox of producing a social whole by representing warring factions, which involve how it ratifies the notion and virtues of a pluralist society.

The contest structure

Newspaper accounts of tailgating issues at the University of Georgia construct definitive oppositional pairs among the social parties involved in the debate. These oppositions can be seen in the language used to describe various positions towards tailgating. To establish sides, the accounts take the form of a play-by-play script, in which competing parties exchange blows in the midst of hotly-contested competition. Often, reporters use first-person accounts from members of the involved parties to describe the arguments and events that contrast each side, thus giving the appearance of media impartiality. Accounts use journalistic standards such as

objectivity and the presentation of both sides of a case, with the resulting formation of these sides representing the tailgating debate as recurring encounters between enemy combatants.

Contrasting positions are further defined through the strident nature of such debate: each party remains steadfast in its conviction that its position is correct, thus deepening the division. The contest structure also defines the roles of the engaged social parties, constructing the sides within a seemingly common-sense framework that dilutes the complexity of the matters at hand. In its focus on the competitive angle of the tailgating debate, the material glosses over the more substantive issues of the actual beliefs of those involved and the reasoning for these beliefs; instead, the coverage focuses on the sensational subject of the contest itself.

The contest structure formulates three main oppositions: administrators versus students, administrators versus parents, and administrators versus fans. Each side is diametrically opposed to the other. Although the details of each opposition vary by case, all are represented in similar point-counterpoint organization, with the arguments playing off one another. Administrators blame student behavior for the need to control the on-campus environment. Parents rebuke administrators' claims that their children's behavior is more egregious than previous University students. And fans question the administration's decision to restrict game-day activities. The rebuttal from each competing side quickly follows, and what transpires resembles a game-like atmosphere as the combatants go back-and-forth in their assertions that their perspective is indeed the correct perspective. Hence, the contest structure effectively lays out the positions of each side while presenting them as engaged in a constant state of struggle.

While the contest structure divides the social whole into a set of warring groups, the sides thus produced often contain many inconsistencies. For instance, while the contest structure allows administrators to chastise parents for wayward student behavior, it does not allow parents

to publicly rebuke their children for such behavior. Thus, even though the contest structure creates clear oppositions, such contests are often unbalanced and asymmetrical.

To demonstrate the nature of the oppositions constructed and how the contest structure forms the contrasts between social parties, it is necessary to examine several examples that elucidate this structure's role in the construction of tailgating as a problem. Although these oppositions involve different social parties, the sides are always represented in the same manner, with the contentious nature of the tailgating debate the recurring feature. The fact that these individual sides are distinct entities holding their own views towards the debate is not important; rather, how their representation and inclusion in the broader conflict is embodied in language is the key feature of interest in this analysis.

Administrators versus students

The hostility between administrators and students is one recurrent contest in the coverage of the tailgating debate. The two sides are represented in staunch opposition in regards to their positions on acceptable game-day behavior. One means by which their opposition as a contest is embodied is through relations of sequence. Often, accounts first portray student conduct as unconscionable, then make a comparison to the more responsible administrative behavior. The sequence created by this positioning makes the contrasts between the administrators and students all the more palpable. For instance, Simmons and Jones (2005) describe common student practices at football games, stating that "[o]ne student says he brought six beers into the game. Others tuck bottles, flasks, and cans under their clothes or in pockets. Beer bottles and cans litter the ground inside the stadium." The account then contrasts the image of disorderly student behavior with the scene inside of one of the administration's skyboxes: "[President] Adams […]

says he doesn't serve alcohol to his guests [at football games]. 'I could. I've been other places where presidents did […] We have some responsibility to set an example'" (Simmons & Jones, 2005). Accounts such as these juxtapose the portrait of a stately President hosting his honored guests in an alcohol-free sky suite with an image of uncontrollable students whose only one goal is to drink as much as possible. In its notation of the differences between the two sides, and in its direct placement of the sides next to each other, this account locates students and administrators on opposite ends of the spectrum, constructing clear positions of affirmation and denigration in the process.

The sequencing feature also can be seen in headlines. The headline of Anderson and Jones' (2006) report of the changes leading up to the Georgia-Florida game alludes to the opposition between administrators and students: "World's Largest Cocktail Feud: UGA and Florida want to crack down on drinking. Defiant students say it's a tradition they won't give up." The clash continues as administrators and students establish their positions with the account providing coverage of both sides, using the sequence technique, with the fulcrum of the comparison the word "but":

> [S]chool officials hope new policies designed to curb underage and binge drinking pay off […] the schools have enacted tougher policies on alcohol […] and UGA President Michael Adams has asked the media to stop using the reference The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party. But many students aren't buying it [...] students are angry—defiant, even—about the universities' efforts […] believing that the administrators are trying to turn the game into a tea party and their campuses into temperance unions.

This account speaks to the contentious nature of the opposition between administrators and students. The administration wants to limit behaviors that it believes are detrimental to the

mission and image of the University while students refuse to take these measures lying down. By placing the student response directly after a description of the administration's efforts to control it, such a technique produces the opposition between the two parties. The use of derisive terms to describe the actions of both sides only adds to the evident conflict between the two. There is obvious separation between the views of these social parties, and the organization of the dispute by this sequencing technique produces this friction.

Administrators versus parents

A second opposition exists in the relationship between administrators and parents. Forged through the administration's haste to place blame on parents for their students' flagrant misbehavior and the subsequent parental backlash defending themselves and their children, this opposition plays each side off of the other in order to contrast the perspectives. While it would seem that administrators and parents would be willing to work together to rectify student conduct issues plaguing campus, the contest structure produces these two parties as well as competing factions at war with one another. Once again, each party's position is incorporated into the accounts, with quick transitions that frame the arguments into heated exchanges between enemy combatants. Also, first-person accounts from the involved parties seek to authenticate claims made in the stories by relying on the journalistic norm of objectivity. However, the administration's perspective is often the only side directly quoted in the material, suggesting that a spokesperson for the administration fits much more clearly into the journalistic norm of official source, in comparison to a fan chosen at random off the street.

The nature of the administrator/parent opposition is evident in Simmons' (2006f) interpretation that "[p]arents often don't realize how much or how often their kids drink once

they get to college […] According to Alan Campbell, an associate dean for student support, 'Parents too often treat this as kids being kids.'" The story then embodies the contest structure through sequencing by shifting to Campbell's description of an encounter with an upset mother after her child's arrest for underage drinking and his ensuing reaction: "'This is an outrage,' the mother wrote Campbell. 'The university shouldn't allow this to happen. These are good kids.' 'That's not an uncommon response from a parent'" (Simmons, 2006f). The administration's position is clearly noted by the direct quotation from a University official, and the account meets the requirements of the contest structure as well as journalistic norms by including direct testimony from the other side, even though the witness and her testimony was not bodily present.

A similar account that also produces through the contest structure and the sequencing technique a battle between administrators and parents can be seen in an opinion column in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. In this column, the unidentified author(s) responds to the pervasive "alcohol and drug problem" plaguing the University, contending that "[p]arents say the university ought to police campus drinking. The university says many abuses occur beyond its reach […] and that kids come to UGA as already seasoned drinkers" (Tone down, 2006). By going back-and-forth from one side's contention to the other's rejoinder, the differences are opposed and made tangible: lines have been drawn, and the finger-pointing has begun. A University spokesperson invokes plausible deniability, saying that the "university has gone easy on kids caught with booze because of parental pressure, 'but that hasn't worked […] we are going back to the standard policy and taking them to jail'" (Tone down, 2006). This claim places blame squarely on the shoulders of students' parents—not the administration—for permitting their children's misbehavior to go unchecked while demonstrating the fervent opposition between the two parties. Once more, a direct quotation comes from the administration's

perspective legitimating its position while substantiating the notion of journalistic objectivity in the coverage of the tailgating debate.

Administrators versus fans

The final opposition producing and embodying the contest structure materializes the opposition of administrators and fans. As it is done in the first two oppositions, the accounts examined embody the same kinds of ways in which these opposed groups are two defiant sides at war.

Once again, the contest structure allows both sides to voice their often vehement criticisms, with the newspaper positioned through it as a neutral party. For example, one account contrasts the fans' perceived motives for the restrictions with the University's reasoning for their implementation. It begins with a quote from Vice President George Stafford: "'[i]t was absolutely necessary that we do this [….] We had to get cars off the sidewalks and fans out of the streets. We're doing this for safety.'" The account then juxtaposes the official's statement with the perspective of a fan who believes that "'the glory days of classic southern football and great tailgating that Lewis Grizzard used to write about are gone [….] It's more Ivy League now and I think they want it that way'" (Towers, 2006).

The contest structure and the sequencing technique are used in this account to create a string of opposed allegations. This direct quotation is immediately followed with another assessment detailing this time the administration's position: "Stafford insists that '[we] aren't trying to change the culture. We're just trying to do some things in the name of balance. We will no longer stand idly by while the campus is destroyed because there's a football game in town'" (Towers, 2006).

The contest structure, operating primarily through the technique of sequencing direct quotations from one side with direct quotations from the other, produces a routinized framework of side versus side. The quotations articulate each side's position while demonstrating and defining the very existence of the oppositions themselves. These oppositions are made plainly visible through the sequence of one statement placed immediately after the other, further contrasting the positions and signifying the hostility between sides. In its arrangement of the claims, this account—as do all the others—accentuates the differences between the two parties while perpetuating the existence of a fundamental clash of wills.

An account of game-day parking changes also exemplifies how the contest structure operates. The report oscillates between arguments, presenting one side's position and immediately following it with the other's rebuttal. According to Brewer (2000), "University of Georgia [...] officials are pleased with the new parking plan implemented this year […] even if […] fans continue to be dissatisfied." Here, the journalist contrasts the two sides through the use of a transitional statement that constructs the opposed view points, creating a vivid image of conflict: administrators are satisfied with their efforts to correct parking issues while fans are frustrated with the changes.

The comparison continues as an administrator asserts that "'the execution of the parking plan was very well done'" (Brewer, 2000). This assertion is directly followed by one from a fan who contests the effectiveness of the plan, claiming that "'[t]here were a lot of people who were and continue to be disappointed with the way the administration has handled this. We protested the decision because we are loyal fans'" (Brewer, 2000). The sequencing of these statements produces a vivid image of two sides embroiled in conflict. Direct quotations from each contingent depict convincingly the resentment: administrators believe that their efforts were both

necessary and effective, while fans believe that just the opposite is true. The construction of two sides against each other adds to the representation of this conflict intensifying a tenuous set of circumstances, while the use of first-person narratives creates the appearance of a non-biased account.

In sum, the contest structure produces the various positions in the tailgating debate by portraying it as a constant battle between opposite sides. Although the individual parties differ, the accounts represent their struggles in consistent fashion, thus demonstrating the ubiquity and flexibility of the contest structure. Coverage presents both sides of the argument, often with one contention directly following the other, thus resembling two dominant football teams battling on the field for gridiron glory. Direct quotations from members of both sides provide the audience a first-hand glimpse of the opponents at war with one another, thus reaffirming through use the journalistic norm of objectivity. The coverage exhibits a seemingly objective portrayal of the dispute by maintaining prescribed journalistic principles of objectivity and presenting both sides of an argument while accentuating the differences involved in this turbulent social debate. These differences define the oppositional positions involved in the clash, providing the audience with concrete players to follow. Individual party lines are not relevant, nor are the meanings or intentions from which the sides construct their positions; rather, the overarching atmosphere of discord and the very public nature of its display are the focus of the contest structure.

The consensus structure

While the contest structure used to organize the tailgating debate produces a battle filled with hostility and dissension, it is in many ways subsumed within a larger and deeper second structure that produces paradoxically a unified social whole. Where the first structure was

labeled a "contest," this second structure can be labeled a "consensus," which operates in different ways from the first and is embodied by different kinds of textual features. By contrast to positioning readers as outside observers and referees as the contest structure does, the consensus structure includes them as part of the situation. It makes the reader a participant in tailgating; therefore, he or she is constituted as an engaged member of this athletic ritual.

The consensus structure thus subsumes the divisive and external debate between sides within a framework that enables, permits, and even to some degree encourages this strident debate, thus implying that, just as the tailgating debate is a healthy feature of a caring and committed populace, other broader debates locally and nationally also exemplify this feature. By positioning readers as part of the debate, an important ideological function transpires: audience members are compelled to think of themselves not as individuals with clearly different interpretations of the practice of tailgating, but rather as a cohesive community affected by the matter. Language recognizes each reader as an authentic participant in the debate surrounding the practice. Through this representation, the rationality that the reader takes an active role in the tailgate discussion (and that he or she should therefore be concerned with its potential characterization as a social problem) materializes and confirms the notion of consensus-building.

This sense of oneness, of a whole community united in its interpretation of the significance of the tailgating struggle, reinforces commonalities shared by a readership made up of various members in the community with differing opinions towards the practice. By producing an awareness of each reader's participation in a broader social whole, the consensus structure that organizes the tailgating debate brings together a diverse collection of individuals who can now better interpret the contentious world surrounding them.

In terms of technique, the consensus structure achieves its audience positioning in two ways: through the use of directives and second-person address and through structured absences involving assumed prior knowledge of the issues and of standard explanations of the parties involved. Language brings the audience into the debate, assuring the reader that its outcome affects us all and that a shared perspective exists.

Use of directives and second-person address

One way in which the consensus structure works is through the use of directives and second-person address. Through these narrative techniques, readers become an important member of this game-day tradition. Each member of the audience is directly inserted into the debate, thus positioning readers into a social whole where all are a part of this contentious issue. The consensus structure reconciles the struggle between different belief systems and different readers.

Examples of the use of directives and second-person address include Jenkins' (1999) recommendation to her readers that "[y]ou'll need energy to cheer, so get things in order early and let the fun begin." This assertion also demonstrates the second key technique through which the consensus structure works, and that is by the use of structured absences—in this case, in assuming that the reader has prior knowledge of the rituals, routines, and significance of tailgating. What makes this assumption a structuring absence is that this knowledge is at most only alluded to instead of extensively provided, and thus absent from these accounts while it also structures them. It positions the audience within the tailgating community by addressing the reader as a knowledgeable participant. In its unspoken assumption that its readers are also tailgaters, the statement subsumes the external observing audience as produced by the contest

structure within the community of tailgaters. The subsuming of the audience within the activity continues with more directives, such as "[t]o help you throw a super celebration, follow the advice of our team of veteran tailgaters," which is followed by a list of practical tailgating necessities, which functions both as a checklist of instructions for readers who may still need some practical knowledge as well as a reaffirming sign that readers to whom this is already known indeed are part of the community (Jenkins, 1999). This information constructs the audience within a predetermined role as active participants in the practice of tailgating and its discussion.

Other examples of how the consensus structure works through directives, second-person address, and structuring absences can be seen in articles that document the restrictions imposed on tailgating in a sequential manner, listing the prescribed orders: "No tailgating before 7 a.m. on game day. No parking on sidewalks or grass. No tailgating in parking spaces. No alcohol consumption in designated family-friendly zones" (Simmons, 2006e). The use of direct address also implicitly places the audience as directly affected by these restrictions, thus working as a structuring absence through this assumption. These orders construct the audience as a group of individuals requiring such information because the restrictive measures directly affect them; as such, they are placed into a community of affiliated readers who, collectively, are a part of the tailgating debate.

Other illustrations demonstrating the nature of the consensus structure include other kinds of characterizations of the audience as a social whole, such as one that uses second-person address and directives to remind tailgaters that they "were mailed a map of the new parking plan; if you didn't receive yours or need another one, call the UGA Athletic Association Ticket Office or visit the University website" (Hamilton, 2000). This item positions the audience within the

role of football fans and tailgaters who would need such information; because of this positioning, they are constructed as participants in a community influenced by tailgating policies.

Reliance on prior knowledge and standard explanations

As already alluded to, and in addition to the techniques of second-person address and directives, the second way that the consensus structure works is by structured absences, which consist most clearly of the assumption of readers' prior knowledge of the issues and the rituals, practices, and significance of tailgating. One can see this operating in many accounts, which typically do not describe the development of tailgating issues, assuming instead that the audience has prior knowledge of them. This absence structures each reader, with each one cast within the broader community that is already well-informed about the tailgating debate. Furthermore, the contest structure can be seen as subsumed by the consensus structure because often strident differences (how the contest structure works) are given extensive and equal treatment, with neither outside nor unable to gain a hearing.

Particularly clear examples of the operation of structured absences include making only passing reference to game-day restrictions on tailgating, inferring that the audience already knows the details of the policy changes. This technique positions tailgating as a common-sense and well-known activity that in turn links the audience into a community. Other accounts only briefly mention the new policies in the context of otherwise reviewing extensively the atmosphere surrounding the first football weekend: "[a]nd—despite worries about new tailgating and parking regulations and a crackdown on drinking in designated areas—the outdoor party carried on as usual, with thousands of participants set up in scores of parking lots across campus" (Scott, 2006). Despite the detailed description of several tailgate parties, the account makes no

other mention of the restrictions, nor provides any indication of how the restrictions may or may not have affected the day. The presumption is that the audience is already aware of the restrictions prior to reading this account, comprehends the reasoning behind their implementation, and is complicit with the author's choice to leave out these details. These and other such accounts display how the structured absence that helps constitute the consensus structure positions the audience within a community consisting of people who already understand tailgating and the debate.

Normative interpretations of the constructed sides also contribute to the positioning of the audience within the consensus structure. Readers are treated as sharing consistent perceptions of the sides in the debate based on the explanations offered in the coverage; through their consistent representation of the sides, the explanations legitimize the oppositions constructed through the text. Many explanations exist for each oppositional pair. One example demonstrates how this works. The continual construction of opposing sides suggests its basis in "real life" simply by virtue of its ubiquity. Some accounts write about being "ashamed of what my fellow Bulldogs do to our campus in the name of football, fun, and, I suppose, frustration," while they also characterize administrators' attempts to "turn this campus into more and more green space, [requiring] some help from the public to ensure it stays that way" (Burger, 2007). Through the continual use of the contest structure, which defines the sides as good or bad/right or wrong, coverage of the tailgating debate transforms opinion and judgment into common-sense truths that contribute to a social whole unified in its perceptions of the opposed parties.

In contrast to the contest structure, the consensus structure positions the audience as members of a social whole. It constructs the reader as an active participant in tailgating primarily through the techniques of directives, second-person address, and structured absences. These

techniques position the audience as participants in the practice and the debate. This structure also presumes prior knowledge by the audience of the issues, thus reinforcing the positioning of the audience within a community. The application of standard explanations to represent the opposed parties further serves to bring the audience together by limiting available reader perceptions of the various sides in conflict.

Social implications

The two structures contained in coverage of the tailgating debate represent two clearly contrasting positions. On one hand, coverage depicts a disconcerting scene of clashing sides at war with one another over tailgating. The contest structure organizes the dispute through the partitioning of social parties against each other, making the possibility of agreement among the groups seem a remote prospect. Accounts represent a chaotic campus environment that threatens to tear the University community apart. Students, parents, and fans lash out at an administration that they believe has overstepped its institutionally-defined boundaries in enacting tailgating restrictions and other like measures with the coverage revealing these frustrations in lurid detail. Likewise, the administration's position as produced by the contest structure is that the restrictions are merely reactions aimed at restoring a sense of order and normalcy to a campus plagued by irresponsible behavior. The social whole at the University has been divided into warring factions and the campus community appears to be in shambles. It would seem that the contentious nature of the tailgating debate and the enmity between the involved sides will assuredly spill over into the local community and pose a threat to the broader community.

Instead, through the consensus structure, which can be seen to subsume the contest structure, just the opposite is true. Instead of tearing apart the social fabric, the potentially

dangerous threat to the social order is not only averted, but reconciled and positioned in positive instead of negative terms, thus exemplifying the value noted early in this study of focusing attention on how differences are articulated. The consensus structure positions readers together as united in the much larger contingent comprised of the entire readership and, by extension, of the broader community. Both structures together accomplish this by producing a sense that dissenting opinions expressed in the public forum cannot simply be accommodated or minimized, but that they are necessary to the well-being of society. Even while the opposing sides battle with one another over the tailgating issue, the audience is reminded that everyone is in this together and that arguments over tailgating are a healthy part of and can be accommodated within the existing social order. Although the social parties do not agree with one another—and often times vehemently disagree—the public airing of these disputes reinforces the notion that the broader social whole, and thus society itself, can reconcile such discord.

Importantly, traditional journalistic norms work with these structures of contest and consensus in key ways. The neutrality of the coverage, established through the utilization of the traditional reporting norms of objectivity and the presentation of both sides of an argument, produces the belief that society can accommodate such sharp dissension between social parties. In its construction of oppositional pairs, the newspaper is also positioned as detached from the sides involved in the dispute. The use of these standard journalistic practices constructs the accounts as impartial, transparent reproductions of the arguments and events at hand, thus positioning the newspaper as a neutral observer. By not taking sides, journalistic norms produce the debate as an important social issue. But also by publicly airing this debate in all its gory details instead of quashing all coverage, they also produce the debate as open, necessary and

healthy for the local community. By doing so, the functional value of the commercial newspaper within the existing social order is substantiated.

It may seem quite a stretch to see in a study of something as seemingly far removed from significant political practice as tailgating implications for the entire social order. After all, a wide gulf indeed exists between, say, forwarding national legislation and gathering fans together for hot dogs and beer before a football game. However, one must recognize these widely disparate practices as part of the same social order, that is underwritten and enabled by deep, underlying structures that produce these and other practices that, together, reproduce the social order.

Hall's (1981) comments about the importance of the study of popular culture underscore this point. Popular culture can broadly be considered "[v]irtually *anything* which 'the people' have ever done […] Pigeon-fancying and stamp-collecting, flying ducks on the wall and garden gnomes" (p. 234, original emphasis). But studies immersed in such detail, focusing on the minutiae of the activities themselves, completely miss the underlying point. Rather, to study popular culture is to consider "the domain of cultural forms and activities as a constantly changing field [while examining] the relations which constantly structure this field into dominant and subordinate formations [and evaluating] the *process* by which these relations of dominance and subordination are articulated" (p. 235, original emphasis). In essence, the study of popular culture is the study of the process of formation and containment of the social order. Hall contends that studies of the popular that neglect the question of how the social order can be challenged overlook the most critical element of this focus. Hall concludes by stating that this question is of such import to the greater significance of studying the popular that, unless such a question guides its study, "to tell you the truth, I don't give a damn about [popular culture]" (p. 239).

Thus, a structural analysis of the constitution of tailgating as a social problem is more than the study of an isolated, perhaps strange social ritual. Viewed within the context of the politics of popular culture, it provides an understanding of the deeper ways in which the social order is produced and enforced. The analysis presented here is most compelling when it is seen not simply as dealing with an individual, local situation, but as a synecdoche for liberal-pluralist society. The contest and consensus structures as they are articulated endorse the pluralistic nature of our society through the presentation and description of the various sides bared publicly for all to read. By representing the social parties through their different positions regarding the practice of tailgating, these structures and their articulation enable dissenting opinion not as an indication of cultural deficiency, but rather a natural and welcome social strength. Debate brings fresh ideas and new perspectives, often resulting in social progress. Incompatibilities will always exist in a society consisting of groups holding various ethnic, religious, or political beliefs, but these incompatibilities are the differences and depth in which resides the resilience of pluralist society. In its detailed presentation of the harsh criticisms delivered by the oppositional parties, but also in its containment through the positioning of these sides and the audience within a broader social whole, the structures that organize coverage of the tailgating dispute demonstrate that virulent debates and differences within social formations can be expressed and accommodated within a vastly inclusive public sphere.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will review the study and discuss its general significance in regards to the construction of social problems. I will also document the study's contributions to academic literature, address the limitations of my research, and pose some thoughts towards opportunities for further study.

Review of study

This analysis seeks to better understand the construction of social problems by examining a cultural formation that has only recently been labeled as such. Although it has existed in one form or another for centuries, tailgating has evolved into a contentious subject that is both practiced by many and looked upon with scorn by many. Concentrating on the contradictory nature of cultural forms and the structures that work through texts, this study builds on the existing body of literature on the cultural construction of social problems and other studies of popular culture in order to extend this focus to a current social issue. Grounded in Hall's concepts of ideology and articulation, this study works through the differences incumbent in the debate by focusing on how deep structures materialize meaning and, in doing so, reproduce the social order.

I conducted an ideological analysis on a sample of fifty-four newspaper articles providing coverage of tailgating to better understand the structures that organize discussions of tailgating and give meaning to its debate. This analysis revealed two key structures that produced the

accounts that I closely examined. The contest structure underscores the divisive nature of the coverage, pitting the various social parties involved in the debate against one another. Oppositions are constructed through two language mechanisms that emphasize the imminent hostility between sides. Coverage presents both sides of the argument through sequential relationships in which one contention directly follows another, thus visibly marking their differences. First-person direct quotations are used to articulate each side's position and to promote the notion of journalistic objectivity by situating the newspaper as a neutral observer in the dispute. The contest structure effectively separates the social whole at the University of Georgia into a compilation of warring factions that threatens the foundation of the broader local community.

The consensus structure not only overcomes the threat to the social order posed by the conflict structure, its viability and value is emphasized by the conflict structure by subsuming the debate between sides within a framework that facilitates, sanctions, and promotes this strident debate. By positioning readers within a much larger community than the one torn apart through the contest structure, this second structure positions audience members within and part of the tailgating discussion, thus confirming the notion that the entire readership is affected by the matter and that a shared perspective exists. Consensus is established through two different audience positioning techniques. The use of directives and second-person address repositions audience members from passive readers into active participants in the game-day ritual. Structured absences, comprised of the assumption of readers' prior knowledge of the issues and standard explanations of the rituals, practices, and significance of tailgating, also position the audience as members of a larger community. This whole community subsumes the contest structure, reaffirming the notion that such vociferous debate can and should be expressed in the

public sphere and that such discord is necessary to the health and well-being of pluralist social discourse. Thus, the structures inherent to the tailgating debate—and, subsequently, the debate itself—serve as a ratification of the existing social order, underscoring the principle that our society can handle vast social discord manifested in the public media.

General significance

As this study has shown, the practice of tailgating has been constructed as a social problem. Tailgating is simply one instance of the multitude of cultural forms that demonstrate the deeply political process that popular culture is. By examining the structures that make tailgating a significant cultural formation, this study enables a better understanding of the larger external pressures that reproduce the social order. This cultural activity is neither a fixed nor final event, but rather an ongoing, dynamic process contingent upon the delicate balance between social relations: it is, in essence, a struggle. Thus, the study of this practice of popular culture provides a reading of the articulation of the relations that dictate the social order.

However, the study of this popular cultural practice demonstrates the perpetuation of the social order. Structures through which the coverage was formed prevent the reader from taking sides; instead, the focus shifts to the fact that the tenacity of arguments over tailgating is actually a positive reminder that our society is built on such vivacious and discordant debate and that the social order freely encompasses such argument into its cultural fabric. Instead of allowing the audience to locate itself in support or antipathy of a particular side within the debate, the coverage positions the audience within a broader social whole that remains complicit with the restrictions and cognizant of the necessity for strident debate in our society. By limiting the variability of potential audience readings, coverage of the tailgating debate establishes preferred

meanings that produce this and other social practices and reproduce the social order, thus attesting to the value of studying popular culture.

Contributions to academic literature

This study contributes to the literature in four main areas. First, it closely examines how structures constitute media texts. Thus, this study can serve as a guide for others who want to better understand the ways in which structures that organize newspaper accounts reproduce existing social formations for the benefit of dominant interests in society. Second, this study adds to the discussion of the construction of social problems. By analyzing how newspaper accounts of tailgating construct power differentials between the parties involved, this study demonstrates how structures contribute to the establishment of dominance within the debate to perpetuate and augment uneven social relations. This study documents how newly-prescribed notions of acceptable and unacceptable activities associated with tailgating become transformed into common-sense beliefs through structuring of the debate, thus characterizing tailgating as a cultural site where power is articulated. Third, this study adds to the broader range of literature on popular culture by discussing how coverage of the tailgating debate is an important site of the reproduction of popular culture and common sense. Since contradictions within the debate are a major focus of the coverage, this study demonstrates the articulatory nature of meaning-making. Finally, this study contributes to the literature on tailgating. While past literature focused on its history or its phenomenon, very little academic research has previously been conducted on this cultural form. This study looks at how tailgating, through its construction as a problem, contributes to the social understanding of the surrounding world.

Limitations of the research

   While contributing to four different areas of academic literature, this study is also limited in three distinct ways. First, in choosing to analyze only one medium, this study does not incorporate the different potentials posed by including media forms other than newspapers. The exclusion of such other media as television news coverage of the tailgating debate or of sports talk radio segments pertaining to the discussion of the tailgating restrictions limits the possibilities of the research focus. The inclusion of such material may have contributed to a richer analysis of the issues at play emerging from a variety of viewpoints from different media.

   Second, the choice to utilize only local newspapers as primary source material as opposed to including regional or national publications further confines the variety of available perspectives included in this analysis. The accounts comprising the bulk of the material come from journalists who live and work in Athens and the surrounding area, and are, thus, directly affected by the change in policies. Had this study included more accounts from other newspapers outside the local area, these media representations may have portrayed the events from a different perspective for a different readership.

   Finally, this study is limited in its decision to focus only on media, in general. As previously alluded to, the formation and containment of the social order is a vastly complex and difficult process, of which different media forms play a small but significant role. As such, it should not be compartmentalized or viewed solely from a singular perspective. When considering the significance of such an analysis, it is important to realize the complexity of this activity, and that to study the process from a media focus is to restrict the potential possibilities of analysis due to this choice.

Opportunities for further study

Although this study builds on the range of existing literature, there still exists several opportunities for further study that would extend the influence of this focus. Future research on tailgating and its construction as a social problem would add to the critical exploration of this element of popular culture.

This study relies on media coverage of the debate in order to analyze its construction as a problem. Nonetheless, as mentioned before, the media is merely one component in the complex activity of social construction; thus, it would be helpful to speak directly with the parties involved in order to gain their first-hand perspectives on the issue. A study utilizing direct contact with the effected groups, either through interviews or surveys, would incorporate personal perspectives into the analysis, providing additional insight into how the individual parties perceive the tailgating debate and how these perceptions are themselves generated structurally.

Gauging audience perception of the coverage would be another extension of the present study. Studying the effects of the coverage on the readership would provide conclusive evidence as to the effectiveness of journalistic attempts at consensus-building among audience members. Implications of the audience effects of the coverage of a popular cultural form would shed light on the capabilities of and the impediments to the news media's role in shaping the policy of current events.

Finally, future research should delve into the motivations behind the constitution of tailgating as a problem. Currently, a number of possibilities exist, including the administration's reactions to student drug and alcohol problems, the financial gains posed by selling on-campus parking spaces, as well as the perceived increase in game-day incidents at the University of

Georgia. Studies exploring the intent behind the labeling of tailgating as a social problem would

provide further insight into issues of cultural construction.

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APPENDIX

A. Reviews examined

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