Objectionable Sport Team Designations

Frank Nuessel[1]

Sport team nicknames have a long tradition in North America. In recent years these designations have received much journalistic attention because some of the names are now considered racist, especially those that refer to Native Americans. High school, college and university, and professional team names are surveyed. Several of the teams' nicknames, logos and mascots may be viewed as racist and/or sexist. The current debate over "political correctness" and its relationship to these nicknames is also addressed.

Introduction

Nicknames for sport teams enjoy a long tradition. This custom has been a part of the Canadian and United States heritage for most of the twentieth century. The ten most frequently used nicknames for college athletic teams, according to Franks, are, in order of popularity *Eagles*, *Tigers, Cougars, Bulldogs*, *Warriors, Lions, Panthers, Indians, Wildcats,* and *Bears* (9). This top ten list of sport team nicknames encapsulates the trend for high school, college and professional teams since eight of the names indicate certain animals with vicious or predatory tendencies. Most sports fans consider these to be characteristics that competitive athletic teams ought to possess. Two of these terms, *Indians* and *Warriors,* however, refer to American Indians who, presumably, also possess these traits.[2] In recent years, references to native peoples have come under critical scrutiny because of their overt or implied racist connotation. Bosmajian has carefully documented this conventional historical image of the North American Indian (62-89). Much of the misleading and erroneous imagery derives from stereotypic and one-dimensional portrayals of Native Peoples in comic books, films, literature, history books

Names 42.2 (June 1994):101-119
ISSN:0027-7738

(Council on Interracial Books for Children 1977, 67-85), and television.

In the past few years, the print media have documented the fact that certain sport team nicknames have come under attack.[3] This study will deal with objectionable nicknames for sport teams at the high school, college and university, and professional levels. The data bases utilized include the names of the current members of the National Basketball Association, the National Football League, the National Hockey League, the American League and National League of major league baseball,[4] Ray Franks' compendium of the nicknames of college athletic teams, and other selected articles.[5]

Part one of this essay will clarify basic terminology, part two will address the team nicknames deemed objectionable, part three will discuss the semiotic significance of the team names and related conduct, and part four will address the issue of "political correctness" and sport team designations.

Terminology

At the outset, some terminological clarification is necessary. The terms *nickname, mascot,* and *logo* are sometimes used synonymously, or confused. In this essay, these expressions have different meanings. *Nickname* will be the commonly used linguistic designation for a given sport team, *logo* will refer to the graphic two-dimensional, artistic image of a team's designation, and *mascot* will refer to the three-dimensional manifestation of a team's nickname. In such instances, the mascot may be an actual animal, e.g., a steer as in the case of the University of Texas *Longhorns.* In most cases, the mascot is a person who dons a costume, or wears appropriate makeup to depict the mascot, e.g., the University of Louisville *Cardinal.*

Sifakis notes that the word "nickname" derives from Middle English *ekename* or 'extra' name (ix). The nicknames given to amateur and professional sport teams are just that, extra names assigned to a particular team to provide it with a distinctive identity. Because of their competitive nature, sport teams prefer nicknames that connote speed, strength, heroism, and courage. Most often these designations refer to animals (*Bears, Bulls*), natural disasters (*Cyclones, Hurricanes*), objects (*Jets, Bullets, Rockets, Spurs*),

occupations (*Buccaneers, Kings*), and other phenomena, products, or people that signify those attributes that opposing athletic teams need to win games and championships.

Finally, the term *racism* has as its dictionary definition "the notion that one's own ethnic stock is superior" (Morris 1075). In this dictionary sense, the term *racist*, often used to refer to certain sport team nicknames, may be inappropriate since there are some people who believe that they are paying homage to a particular ethnic group, e.g., native peoples. In this sense, the use of such designations might be considered insensitive rather than racist.

Team Nicknames

Those sport team nicknames that can be considered racial or ethnic slurs will now be discussed. As noted above, most recent media coverage of nicknames centers on derision of native peoples. These nicknames, however, are not the only examples of such offensive designations.

High School Athletic Teams

Illinois and Indiana high school athletic teams designations have received critical scrutiny recently.[6] In Indiana, most of the objectionable designations involve generic names for Native Peoples, e.g., *Braves, Indians, Squaws, Redskins, Warriors*. At least one, the *Mohawks* of Waldron, Indiana (Warren C3) refers to a specific group of Native Peoples. In Illinois, according to Deardorff ("Name-calling"), school nicknames that allude to Native Peoples are second only to animal names. Elementary and high school athletic teams use the following nicknames: *Blackhawks, Braves, Indians, Injuns, Mohawks, Redskins, Papooses* (Center School Grade School), *Sequoits*. The designation *Injuns* (Sandwich, Illinois) is doubly offensive because it represents a phonetic distortion of the lexical item *Indian* and it constitutes what Allen classifies as a "sly slur" ("Mispronunciation" 217).

In one of the few references to Asians, Deardorff notes that the former nickname of the Pekin, Illinois, athletic team was *Chinks* ("Name-calling" 14). In 1980, this name was changed to the *Dragons* in recognition of the offensive nature of the previous nickname.

In Indiana, parents objected to the negative and un-Christian nickname *Blue Devils* (Deardorff, "Name-calling" 13).

College Athletic Teams

The most common college and university nickname is *Eagles* (Franks 9). Franks, however, states that "in reality, if all names associated with the American Indian were grouped together, that category would be the unquestionable winner. In addition to *Indian*, such labels as *Redmen, Warriors, Savages, Braves* and *Chiefs* show up frequently as athletic mascots" (10). Franks further states that "these names still remain popular despite the efforts of minority groups around the country to separate any reference to the American Indian from college sports" (10).

In addition to the designations enumerated above, Franks lists many other sport team nicknames related to Native Peoples. These may refer to specific Indian groups, e.g., *Illini* (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), *Hurons* (Eastern Michigan University; this nickname is now the *Eagles)*, *Choctaws* (Mississippi College), *Apaches* (Cochise College, Illinois Valley Community College, Tyler Junior College), *Pequots* (Mitchell College), *Seminoles* (Florida State University), *Fighting Sioux* (University of North Dakota), *Chippewas* (Central Michigan University), *Blackhawks* (Southeastern Community College), and *Mohawks* (North Adams State College).

Other terms refer to more general designations for Indians including references to skin pigmentation: *Redmen* (various colleges and universities), and *Redskins, Brown Indians* (St. Bonaventure). Still other allusions are metonymic (a part of the Native Peoples' tradition stands for the entire group), e.g., *Tomahawks* (Northwestern Michigan, Tuxis Community College).

Yet other allusions are to roles, or group formations of certain Native Peoples, e.g., *Maroon Chiefs* (Morningside College), *Chieftains* (Seattle University), *Indians* (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), *Chiefs* (Lowell University), *Tribe* (Huron College).

One reference is to a particular Indian. *Mighty Oaks* (Oakland City College, refers to "Big Chief Mighty Oak"). A final allusion is to an erroneous characterization of Native Peoples, the *Savages* (Southeastern Oklahoma State University).

The pervasive nature of sport team nicknames at the college level in the United States and North America is exceptionally high (Franks 10). Such designations have been the subject of critical scrutiny in recent media coverage.[7] Below is a list of college-level sport team references to Native Peoples based on Franks' compilation of such nicknames for the United States and Canada.

College Team Nickname:	Occurrences:
Apaches	4
Braves	10
Chiefs	12
Chieftains	1
Indians	25
Redmen	9
Redskins	2
Savages	1
Tomahawks	3
Tribe	1
Warriors	37
Tribal Names: Chippewas, Fighting Sioux, Pequots, etc.	9
Mighty Oaks (Indian's Name)	1
Total	115

It must be noted that a number of teams bear the nickname *Warrior.* This name is not necessarily a reference to Native Peoples. However, the logos that accompany this nickname depict what is oftentimes a pathetic caricature of a Native Person.

Bondy documents what he sees as an increased self-awareness among colleges and universities concerning the insensitivity of their sport team nicknames (E2). He notes that St. John's University will change its current team designation from the "Redmen" to an as yet undecided new nickname (E2). Others that have changed their names are Stanford University (*Indians*), St. Bonaventure (*Brown Indians*), and Siena College (*Indians*). Marquette University (*Warriors*) plans a name change in the fall of 1994.

Another designation that has caused great dissatisfaction in recent years is *Rebels* (University of Mississippi, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Thomas More College, Dixie College, East Central College, Hill Junior College, Jefferson Davis State Junior College [now *Warhawks*], Lee College, Walker Junior College, University of Wisconsin, Rock County). This nickname is offensive because it celebrates those states that seceded from the union over the issue of slavery. For this reason, African-Americans and many who believe in civil rights for all people find this name offensive since it stands for a belief in slavery. The *Confederates* (Gadsden State Junior College) is another term that might alienate some.

Another symbolic element related to these nicknames is the display of the confederate flag, yet another signifier of slavery. It is interesting to note that in the case of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, the name *Rebels* has been retained despite objections, at least since 1973, by the Black Student Union. The official referent for that nickname, however, has now become a colonial rebel (Franks 100). Despite such machinations, many people still find such a name to be offensive because the term "rebel" remains closely associated with the Confederacy and its promotion of slavery.

Two additional references are in order. The first is *Ragin' Cajuns* (Southwestern Louisiana University), a reduced and pejorative form of the word *Acadian,* i.e., people of French Canadian origin who settled in Louisiana (Allen *Language* 45, 91). The attributive adjective *ragin'* before the noun *Cajuns* specifies the temperament of this ethnic group. The second is the *Arabs* (Imperial Valley College, Franks 31-32, 172). The designation *Arab* alludes to the arid geography of Imperial, California, where this junior college is located. Originally, the name *Arab* referred to a thief, a deceitful person, or a shady character (Rennick). The name *Arab,* however, has acquired additional connotations in recent years in the United States because of the frequent use of the term *Arab terrorist* in the media and the Gulf war of 1992 between the United Nations and Iraq. In general, the designation *Arab* has a negative and pejorative meaning especially when it is mispronounced as [eræb] (Allen, *Language* 51; "Mispronunciation" 1988; *Unkind Words* 21, 69).

On a final note, a few other team designations might merit reconsideration. Notre Dame University's *Fighting Irish* conjures up

certain stereotypes of a belligerent person of Irish heritage. Franks, however, notes that there is little certainty about the origin of this name (27-28). A few teams have the nickname *Clansmen* (Belhaven College, Simon Fraser University) which is a reference to people of Scottish descent with a reputation as fierce fighters. It must be noted that in Canada, few would associate this designation with the racist Ku Klux Klan in the United States. Likewise, the nickname *Vikings* (Cleveland State University, Dana College, Life Bible College) refers to people of Scandanavian heritage who were marauding pirates that plundered northern European coastal areas. These designations also constitute misrepresentations of particular ethnic groups, and one must raise the question of whether or not these nicknames are also inappropriate for the same reasons as those that allude to Native Peoples.

The National Basketball Association

The only team designation that might cause concern in the NBA is the *Golden State Warriors* (formerly the *Philadelphia Warriors* and the *San Francisco Warriors)*. This exclusive association of bellicose activity with Native Peoples is disconcerting to many people.

The National Football League

The names of NFL teams have been discussed in the media on a number of occasions (Chapman, Coons).

The *Washington Redskins* is a team whose official designation has been the subject of previous essays (Chapman, Giago). The term *redskin,* documented for the first time in 1699, was among the first ethnic slurs for the indigenous population of North America (Allen, *Unkind Words* 1). It is interesting to note that the *Kansas City Chiefs* have not received any direct criticism even though the name is an allusion to leaders of different groups of Native Peoples.

The National Hockey League

The only professional hockey team nickname that bears an ethnic epithet is the *Vancouver Canucks*. The term *canuck,* according to Allen, did not originate as a derogatory term, and in Canada, this name is apparently not defamatory (*Unkind Words* 59). In the United

States, however, among people from Quebec who live in New England, this term is extremely pejorative (Roback 24, Spears, 64).

The *Chicago Black Hawks* may be another since *Black Hawk* refers to the American Indian leader (1767-1838) of the Fox and the Sauk Indians during the Black Hawk war of 1832.

The American and National Baseball Leagues

In professional baseball, the *Cleveland Indians* have come under attack for the team designation. Part of the criticism derives from the team's logo, which is very stereotypic in its depiction of a North American Indian. Likewise, the *Atlanta Braves* have received similar criticism.

On a historical note, the *Cincinnati Reds* changed the name to the *Cincinnati Redlegs* from 1952-1955 "to avoid homonymous confusion with any other 'Reds'" (Fried 34-35). It must be remembered that during the first half of the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin led his anti-Communist witch hunt with the result that any association with the dread monolithic Cold War demon was to be avoided.

The original name of the Cincinnati baseball team was the 'Red Stockings' until 1880. This became the 'Reds' in 1890.

The Semiotic Nature of Sport Team Nicknames

The designations for sport teams are semiotic in nature, i.e., these names project certain symbolic connotations. As noted earlier, the referents of these names are animals, objects, natural phenomena, or persons considered to possess qualities associated with victorious teams. These nicknames refer to people or objects in the real world with those positive and negative qualities associated with winning or beating an opponent. Positive traits include bravery, courage, cunning, strength, fortitude, valor, skill and ability, to name but a few such characteristics. Negative qualities are brutality, fury, violence, rage, ferocity, and destructiveness. The former are desirable while the latter are objectionable, yet viewed by some as necessary to beat an adversary. In football, which some claim to be a metaphor for the United States, both the good and bad attributes are necessary to subdue and oppress an opponent.

Derision of Indians

It is precisely in the evocation of the negative associations that designations such as *Indian, Warrior,* and *Redskin* create outbursts of angry protest. The traditional image of American Indians in the print and non-print media depicts the indigenous population as brutal, savage, inhumane, and uncivilized. Bosmajian points out that the systematic portrayal of the Indians as savage beasts facilitated their swift annihilation since this characterization meant that the horrible mistreatment and genocide of an entire race was justified because they were not true human beings who deserved to be treated humanely (63-67).

Another important semiotic element related to sport team designations is the non-verbal behavior associated with fans of teams bearing such names as *Indians, Braves* and *Warriors.* The most infamous example is the kinesic gesture designated the "tomahawk chop" used by spectators during games of the *Atlanta Braves,* especially during the 1992 World Series games. This gesture involved the use of a person's arm with hand extended in a quick downward motion to signify a blow by a tomahawk and to refer to the fate of the opposing baseball team (Younkin D2). This reference to a weapon used by American Indians more than a century ago to defend themselves from their adversaries once again emphasizes a brutal characteristic associated with this group. Giago notes that all kinds of Indian paraphernalia designed to denigrate the Indian is sold to fans, e.g., plastic tomahawks, turkey feather ceremonial bonnets, and so forth (8). Such conduct is offensive to American Indians because it unfairly characterizes an entire group of people or insults the meaning of certain ceremonial artifacts.

Giago also alludes to the now infamous *Chief Illiniwek,* the mascot of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (8). This derogatory, stereotypic personification of an American Indian, always interpreted by a white male, often employs farcical kinesic gestures (menacing waves of a tomahawk, war dances), and paralinguistic utterances (war whoops) to mimic an American Indian chief.

As a counterpoint to the claim that these sport team nicknames honor the American Indian, Giago points out that white Americans would find designations such as *palefaces, blackskins, whiteskins or yellowskins* to be objectionable, yet these people are amazed that

American Indians condemn the designation *redskin* (8). Moreover, the recent uproar over actor Ted Danson's application of black face makeup to play a minstrel is considered an outrageously insensitive act (Anonymous). Yet when a white person applies "warpaint," to his face, this conduct is perfectly acceptable to many spectators. Furthermore, almost no one would even consider the overt use of other racist or ethnic slurs in public places.[8] In a letter to the editor, Tom Pearce makes this point when he asks the question "how many teams are there in Jefferson County called the Negroes, Jews, Spics, Wops, Gooks or White Trash? The answer is none" (A6).

Other Objectionable Sport Team Nicknames

Although those sport teams whose designations refer to the American Indian have been subjected to critical scrutiny recently, there are other team nicknames that characterize certain groups unfairly. Notre Dame's *Fighting Irish* is an allusion to the supposedly pugnacious tendencies of this ethnic group.

In the same state, the name for Indiana University's athletic teams, the *Hoosiers*, is a potentially unkind reference to the residents of this state with its connotation of an unruly and uneducated person (Baker and Carmony 72), though no group has taken issue with this designation. The name 'Hoosier' has a negative connotation in the jokes about residents of Indiana by people who live in Kentucky. Moreover, a recent dictionary defines 'Hoosier' as "any awkward, unsophisticated person, esp. a rustic" (Flexner 919).

The *Minuteman* of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst became that school's mascot in 1972 to replace the former Indian considered to be racist. That University's male sports teams are called the *Minutemen* and the female sports teams are the *Minutewomen.* That logo and team nickname has come under attack for being sexist, racist, and militant (Cawley 4; Shea A33).

Sexism

Female athletic teams at the high-school and university level are relatively new. At a more subtle level, the appellations for female sport teams often feature a characteristic form of linguistic prejudice, or demeaning attitude toward its women participants. The designa-

tions of the female teams at the high school and university level are frequently sexist in nature. There are currently no professional female basketball, football, hockey, or baseball leagues, in part because such professional organizations fail to garner sufficient revenue to be successful for a long period of time. Nevertheless, a woman's professional baseball league existed in the 1940s and 1950s and was chronicled in the 1992 movie "A League of Their Own." Likewise, there was a short-lived woman's professional basketball league.

Sexism in sport team nicknames has several linguistic manifestations. The first is to use the noun *lady* as a gender-defining prefix to the name of the male athletic squad. This juxtaposition results in a strange referential antithesis. As indicated above, men's sport team appellations generally allude to animals, persons, groups, or natural forces that signify power, strength, courage, valor, or simple brute force. For this reason, certain appellations for female sport teams can cause contradictory allusions since the designation "lady" has a variety of common connotations such as conformity to certain socially accepted behavior patterns most of which are antithetical to the conduct of a male athletic team (Lakoff 20-26). A "lady," presumably, would be polite, refined, gentle, cultured, and sensitive to matters of propriety and decorum. All of these are traits that no competitive team would wish to show during an athletic competition. Therefore, the use of the term *lady* is almost a parody of the type of behavior that such athletic squads need to manifest. Furthermore, a certain irony exists in the close juxtaposition of "lady" with some person, object, or phenomenon considered to be ferocious and threatening.

The following are typical examples of use of the designation "lady:" *Lady Battlers* (Alderson-Broaddus College), *Lady Razorbacks* (University of Arkansas at Fayetteville), *Lady Tigers* (Auburn University, Texas Southern University), *Lady Bengals* (Buffalo State College), *Lady Crusaders* (Capital University), *Lady Eagles* (Carson-Newman College), *Lady Conquerors* (Midwest Christian College), *Lady Lions* (Missouri Southern College), *Lady Rebels* (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), *Lady Demons* (Northwestern State University), *Lady Rams* (Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science), *Lady Bobcats* (Spring Garden College), *Lady Bulldogs* (Texas Lutheran

College, Western Montana College), and *Lady Commodores* (Vanderbilt University). Also the *Lady Warhawks* (John C. Calhoun Community College) and *Lady Roughriders* (Crowder College).

In one instance, the Decatur, Indiana, male high school athletic team bears the nickname *Braves,* while the female team has the designation of *Squaws* (Warren C3). At the senior college level, this same dichotomy exists for Montclair State College.

In some cases, the women's athletic team is meant to be a clever derivation of the male team nickname based on common gender dichotomies, e.g., *Vikings* and *Vi Queens* (Augustana College), *Rams* and *Rambelles* (Angelo State University), *Kingsmen* and *Kingswomen* (Brooklyn College), *Gentlemen* and *Ladies* (Centenary College), *Mules* and *Jennies* (Central Missouri State University), *Lady Vikings* (Dana College), *Bears* and *Teddy Bears* (Mercer University), *Cowboys* and *Cowgirls* (New Mexico Highlands University, Oklahoma State University), *Lumberjacks* and *Lumberjills* (Northern Arizona University, Northland College), and *Sea Gulls* and *She Gulls* (Salisbury State College). In the junior colleges, additional examples exist: *Golden Stallions* and *Fillies* (Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College), *Skipjacks* and *Skipjills* (Chesapeake College), *Yeomen* and *Yeowomen* (Oberlin University).

Another form of sexist naming involves derivational morphology (Nuessel 37). In this type of linguistic sexism, female teams often take the name of the male team and add a suffix which is a linguistic marker of the secondary or derived status of the women's team. The affix *-ette* is the most common manifestation, and its usage to refer to women is considered patronizing and demeaning. Examples abound: *Rebellettes* (Belmont College), *Bronchettes* (Central State University), *Lancerettes* (Dr. Martin Luther King College), *Devilettes* (Dillard University), *Cadettes* (Norwich University), *Hawkettes* (Quincy College), *Bonnettes* (St. Bonaventure University), *Savagettes* (Southeastern Oklahoma State University), and *Warriorettes* (Sterling College). Examples at the junior college level include *Falconettes* (Miami Dade Community College North), *Warriorettes* (St. Louis College), *Rangerettes* (San Antonio College), and *Texanettes* (South Plains College). Examples at the high school level include *Cougarettes, Tigerettes, Eaglettes* (Deardorff, "Changing Nicknames"). The

morpheme *-ess* to refer to the female of the species is another optional derivational put-down, e.g. *Lioness* (Paine College).

Deardorff documents the doubly offensive *Chinklette* of Pekin, Illinois which is the derivational diminutive form of the racist designation *Chink,* the former name of the male athletic team ("Name-calling" 14). The use of a diminutive affix symbolizes the putative diminished physical stature of women, and by implication a group of athletes of diminished or lessened importance.

On a related note, some professional teams feature all women cheerleader squads, such as football's *Dallas Cowgirls,* basketball's *Lakers Girls* (also a made-for-television movie of the same name). The use of the word *girl* for an adult woman is offensive to many people (for discussion of this point, see Lakoff 25).

Political Correctness

It is difficult to escape discussion of the notion of "political correctness" when alluding to the outcries against certain designations for sport teams in recent years. Whitney and Wartella note that the origins of the term *politically correct*, also known as "PC," are uncertain (84). This expression has been used by conservatives to designate liberal or leftist positions. Several recent books are among those that denounce various aspects of what now is pejoratively labelled the PC movement.[9] Gerald Graff has recently offered an intelligent and reasoned response to the latter volumes. An entire issue of the *Journal of Communication* was devoted to this question.[10] In fact, the whole brouhaha over political correctness has even spawned a humorous volume entitled *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook.*[11]

Whitney and Wartella define "politically correct" as follows:

> PC was used by the media and commentators in newspapers and magazines to refer disparagingly to a host of campus attempts to deal with a wide range of issues including the development of a multicultural student body (multiculturalism); attempts to achieve a multicultural university faculty and staff through affirmative action or preferential hiring policies; the development of sanctions against "hate speech" directed primarily at minorities; changes in undergraduate curricula, primarily in the humanities and often referred to as "canon busting"

> or elaborating curricula beyond the 1950s list of preferred or canonical Western texts; and a host of issues regarding critiques of the culture and university from the quarters of feminist, gay and lesbian, and various ethnic and minority theoretical positions. In short, the movement began to be presented by late 1990 as a movement to forward a Left/liberal political agenda on university campuses which marginalized mainstream, white, male-dominant rule in favor of minority, multicultural, feminist subcultural groups. (85)

The description of the term "political correctness" provided by Whitney and Wartella is amorphous and vague because it refers to a variety of social, pedagogical, and political phenomena (85). Its usage amounts to a form of name-calling in political debates. This label functions as a categorical designation of behavior considered undesirable by conservatives. One of the meanings of "political correctness" is a suppression of the first-amendment constitutional guarantee of free speech. The labelling of certain words or phrases as unacceptable, for some, represents a diminution of this precious right. The choice of sport team nicknames and the elimination of certain of these designations constitutes a microcosm of the current PC debate because those that advocate such name changes are charged with promoting political correctness at the cost of free speech. On the other hand, those who advocate the maintenance of certain athletic squad nicknames, especially those that refer to Native Peoples, are viewed as insensitive and even racist.

It is unlikely that any serious scholar of the U.S. constitution would argue against the right to use team nicknames deemed to be insensitive. However, there is a question of sensitivity and respect for fellow human beings that must also be taken into account. It is really unnecessary to use an ethnic, racist or sexist slur to refer to an athletic team because the name can be changed. No one would argue that such a shift is not without its costs: (1) creation of an acceptable new name; (2) dissemination of a new designation; (3) development of a new logo; and (4) invention of an appropriate mascot. Many new professional sport team franchises have been granted to investors in various cities in Canada and the United States in the past two decades, and each one of these enterprises succeeded in promoting their particular team with little difficulty. So this supposed barrier to a name change is not insurmountable.

The furor over certain sport team nicknames in the past several years has caused some to label this issue as yet another instance of "political correctness."

Conclusion

This article defined certain basic terms (nickname, logo, mascot) to avoid their confusion. A discussion of objectionable high school, university, and professional sport team nicknames followed. The significance of these derogatory nicknames showed that the references were often insensitive and considered by some to be racist or sexist. Moreover, in certain cases, the behavior surrounding the nicknames was demeaning to specific groups, in particular Native Peoples. Finally, this article dealt with the current issue of political correctness, and the change of sport team designations. In a sense, this linguistic polemic is a microcosm of some of the issues involved in the PC debate.

University of Louisville

Notes

[1]I would like to thank Robert M. Rennick for his helpful commentary on an earlier version of this paper. All errors remain my own.

[2] The appropriate term for the indigenous peoples of North America is an unresolved issue. Bosmajian uses the designations *Indian* and *American Indian* (62-63). In the 1970s, the preferred term became *Native American* as a general term, while specific groups are referred to by their particular national name (*Sioux, Cree*). In the 1980s, there was a shift to a preference for the name *Native Peoples* (Beard and Cerf 33). In the 1990s, in Canada, the preferred appellation has become *First Nations*.

[3] See Bondy, Cawley, Chapman, Coons, Deardorff, Giago, Kendall, Nuessel (108-110), Royko, Shea, Warren and Younkin.

[4] See Johnson, 918, 927, 937, 997.

[5] See Cawley, Deardorff "Changing Nicknames," "Morris," "Name-calling," Kendall, Shea, and Warren.

[6] See Deardorff, "Morris," "Name-calling," and Warren.

[7] See references in note 3 above.

[8] See Allen, *Language*; *Unkind Words*, Partridge, Roback, Spears, Wentworth and Flexner.

[9] See D'souza, Kimball, Smith.

[10] See Asante, Burgoon and Bailey, Carey, Dennis, Glasser, Gross, Henderson, O'Keefe, Whitney and Wartella.

[11] See Beard and Cerf. This volume is interesting because it contains an assortment of intentionally humorous definitions. At the same time, however, an extensive listing of sources (137-170) documents the occurrences of "politically correct" language and the debates that surround this polemic. Many of these references are serious academic discussions of language usage, while others are amusing essays on the phenomenon. The Beard and Cerf volume serves as a reliable bibliographic resource on linguistic manifestations of the phenomenon of "political correctness."

Works Cited

Allen, Irving. *The Language of Ethnic Conflict: Social Organization and Lexical Culture.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

_____. "Sly Slurs: Mispronunciation and Decapitalization of Group Names." *Names* 36 (1988): 217-224.

_____. *Unkind Words: Ethnic Labeling from Redskin to Wasp.* New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1990.

Anonymous. "Minstrel Roast." *Time,* 18 October 1993, p. 113.

Asante, Molefe Kete. "The Escape into Hyperbole: Communication and Political Correctness." *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992):141-147.

Baker, Ronald, and Marvin Carmony. *Indiana Place Names.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1975.

Beard, Henry and Christopher Cerf. *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook.* New York: Villard, 1992.

Bondy, Filip. "St. John's Faces Change in Nickname." *Indianapolis Star,* 17 December 1993, p. E2.

Bosmajian, Haig. *The Language of Oppression.* Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1974.

Burgoon, Michael and William Bailey, "PC at Last! PC at Last! Thank God Almighty, We Are PC at Last!" *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992):95-104.

Carey, James W. "Political Correctness and Cultural Studies." Journal of Communication 42 (1992):56-72.

Cawley, Janet. "Critics Hope Clock Runs out on Minuteman." *Chicago Tribune*, 31 October 1993, Section 1, p. 4.

Chapman, Stephen. "Why Indians Won't Be Cheering for the Redskins." *The Indianapolis Star*, 26 January 1992, p. F2.

Coons, Ron. (ed.). "Redskins Draw Protest." *The Courier-Journal,* 22 January 1992, p. D3.

Council on Interracial Books for Children. *Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in U.S. History Textbooks.* New York: Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1977.

Deardorff, Julie. "Changing Nicknames May Not Suit Girls Teams." *Chicago Tribune*, 4 September 1992, Section 4, p. 13.

_____. "Morris Still Redskins For Now." *Chicago Tribune*, 4 September 1992, Section 4, p. 13.

_____. "School Nicknames Become Name-calling to Some." *Chicago Tribune,* 4 September 1992, Section 4, p. 14.

Dennis, Everette E. "Freedom of Expression, the University, and the Media." *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992):73-82.

D'souza, Dinesh. *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*. New York: Free Press, 1991.

Flexner, Stuart Berg (ed.). *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language.* 2nd ed. unabridged. New York: Random House, 1987.

Franks, Ray. *What's in a Nickname? Naming the Jungle of College Athletic Mascots.* Amarillo, TX: Ray Franks Publishing Ranch, 1982.

Fried, Richard M. *Nightmare in Red: the McCarthy Era in Perspective.* New York: Oxford UP,1990.

Giago, Tim. "I Hope the Redskins Lose." *Newsweek,* 27 January 1992, p. 8.

Glassner, Theodore L. "Professionalism and the Derision of Diversity: The Case of the Education Journalist." *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992):131-140.

Graff, Gerald. *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education.* New York: Norton, 1992.

Gross, Larry. "There They Go Again," *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992):105-112.

Henderson, Lisa. "*Paris Is Burning* and Academic Conservatism." Journal of Communication 42 (1992):113-122.

Johnson, Otto. *Information Please Almanac and Yearbook.* Boston, MA, 1994.

Kendall, Peter. "Are School Mascots a Slur or a Salute?" *Chicago Tribune*, 9 April 1992, Section 1, p. 7

Kimball, Roger. *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education.* New York: Harper and Row, 1990.

Lakoff, Robin. *Language and Women's Place.* New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975.

Morris, William (ed.). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Nuessel, Frank. *The Study of Names: A Guide to the Principles and Topics.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.

O'Keefe, Barbara. "Sense and Sensitivity." *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992):123-130.

Partridge, Eric. *A Dictionary of Unconventional English*, 8th ed. edited by Paul Beale. New York: Macmillan, 1984.

Pearce, Tom. "... And Why They Offend" [letter to the editor]. *The Courier-Journal,* 29 March 1993, A6.

Rennick, Robert M. 1993. Personal communication. December 16, 1993.

Roback, A. A. *A Dictionary of Ethnic Slurs (Ethnophaulisms) with a Supplementary Essay on Aspects of Ethnic Prejudice.* Cambridge, MA: Sci-Art Publishers, 1944. [Reprinted 1979 by Maledicta Press, Waukesha, WI].

Royko, Mike. "Team Nicknames Teem with Trouble," *Chicago Tribune*, 17 October 1991, Section 1, p. 3

Shea, Christopher. "A Cloud over Symbols: Once-honored College Mascots Like Indians and Minuteman Now Irk Many on Nation's Campuses." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 10 November 1993, A33, A35.

Sifakis, Carl. *The Dictionary of Historic Nicknames.* New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984.

Smith, Page. *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1990.

Spears, Richard A. *Slang and Euphemism.* Abridged ed. New York: Signet, 1982.

Warren, Jill. "Indian Nicknames Create Little Debate in State." *The Indianapolis Star*, 23 October 199, Cl, C3.

Wentworth, Harold and Stuart Berg Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 2nd ed. New York: Crowell, 1975.

Whitney, D. Charles, and Ellen Wartella. "Media Coverage and the "Political Correctness" Debate." *Journal of Communication* 42 (1992): 83-94.

Younkin, Lou (ed.). "Will Tomahawks Be Chopped?" *The Courier-Journal*, 22 November 1991, D2.